

Modern Criticism and Theory A Reader

Edited by David Lodge and Nigel Wood

Third Edition



Simone de Beauvoir Simone de Beauvoir

The Second Sex, The Second Sex, The Second Sex, The Second Sex, The Second Sex

The Task of the Translator The Task of the Translator The Task of the Translator

Walter Benjamin Walter Benjamin Walter Benjamin

Colonial Fantasies Colonial Fantasies Colonial Fantasies Colonial Fantasies

Meyda Yegenoglu Meyda Yegenoglu

Fredric Jameson Fredric Jameson Fredric Jameson

Postmodernism and Consumer Society Postmodernism and Consumer Society Postmodernism and Consumer Society

A Room of One's Own A Room of One's Own A Room of One's Own A Room of One's Own

Virginia Woolf Virginia Woolf Virginia Woolf

The Typology of Detective Fiction The Typology of Detective Fiction The Typology of Detective Fiction

Tzvetan Todorov Tzvetan Todorov

Frantz Fanon Frantz Fanon Frantz Fanon

Black Skin, White Masks Black Skin, White Masks Black Skin, White Masks Black Skin, White Masks

Reading after Theory Reading after Theory Reading after Theory Reading after Theory

Valentine Cunningham Valentine Cunningham

Modern Criticism and Theory

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A Reader

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David Lodge

and
Nigel Wood



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Foreword

As this *Reader* moves into its third edition, it is time to assess just what has changed in the study of criticism and theory since 1988 when David Lodge provided his first conspectus. The structure of the *Reader* might appear substantially the same: the need for extensive extracts from key writers and their essays is undiminished; introductory headnotes still supply a sense of context and footnotes explain more local references. We have, however, noted significant changes in the way that the teaching and reading of Theory figures in many contemporary cultures. In a variety of guises, it appears to be a staple ingredient in most literary curricula, yet such enforced familiarity does not always bring with it the kind of self-questioning and radical awareness hoped for nearly twenty years ago; indeed, there have been renewed calls for closer and less biased readings of texts and also self-fulfilling predictions of the death of Theory. As is, we hope, evident from this collection, one can predict such a death (as with that of History) prematurely. Indeed, it seems that one can announce that untheoretical reading has returned whilst covertly (re-)introducing theoretical postulates of one's own.

Any new collection of the best criticism and theory should reflect contemporary, that is, newly emergent, preoccupations and insights. In the two previous editions this entailed, wherever possible, full-length essays by writers, 'who have an established reputation, usually based on a substantial body of work, and who are firmly associated with particular theories or methods of criticism' (2nd ed., p. xiii). This has become difficult to achieve with the present collection in that the most valuable theoretical work has increasingly derived, by adaptation or hybridization, from earlier or contemporary theories. The incursion of email (inter)networks into intellectual enquiry has also meant that the identification of a 'substantial' *oeuvre* is harder to trace through printed sources alone. We, therefore, have expanded the collection in two directions, the one taking in comments on new projects such as, for example, ecocriticism or post-theory, that may not have run their full course as yet, but still possess distinct critical impact, the other, taking in more formative writing from earlier in the twentieth century (and in Marx's case, even earlier) that help locate later work more precisely. It has also become apparent that several significant writers have become prominent in literary study more by précis or summary than by first-hand acquaintance. We have, therefore, stretched the sense of 'Modern' criticism or theory to allow more of an unmediated exposure to earlier influences. As with the selections for previous editions, preference has been given to essays that exemplify a theory's practical application, but the rule has still been to represent the original expression of key approaches to literary analysis – and that has sometimes meant the selection of rather more abstract pieces. Their relevance to the work of criticism is suggested in head- or footnotes.

Such a radical revision of the contents of the Reader seemed to call for an introductory essay which would explain its rationale more fully and make connections between the many diverse contributions to theory and criticism which it displays. Since the work of revision was carried out principally by Nigel Wood, this task has been undertaken by him. For those who may be interested in the evolution of the editors' thinking about this Reader, David Lodge's Foreword to the first edition, and Nigel Wood's Preface to the second edition, are included as an appendix to this edition.

David Lodge and Nigel Wood



Introduction

In 1988, when David Lodge edited the first edition of this *Reader*, the study of Theory alongside more general histories of literary criticism was still tentative and exploratory. Was there a difference between criticism and theory? Did one communicate in the language of value and feeling, whereas the other recognized a technical vocabulary and avoided humanistic judgements? The Foreword to that edition is included here in an appendix, and it captures some of the shock felt in Literature departments at the serious and sustained recognition of Structuralist methods within lit. crit. The exclusive need for Close Reading was challenged by the needs of much wider and contextual investigations, involving linguistic systems and semiotic codes that far exceeded the information provided by authorial biographies and generic histories. What did a 'close' reading actually entail? The question was less one of how we approached the details of the literary work, for vague and sloppy perusal of the word was as much a sin in theoretical analysis as in more traditional appreciations; it was more one of dwelling on how we made sense of the reading. As David Lodge noted then, 'we have eaten the apple of knowledge and must live with the consequences' – but perhaps the Fall from critical innocence is really a *felix culpa*, a happy mistake, that helps grant literature an impact that far exceeds the study or lecture-theatre, that permeates, and is permeated by, wider social forces.

By 2000, and the second edition, structuralism had its own rivals in post-structuralism, gender studies and psycho-analytic approaches. In practice, the boundaries between such theoretical emphases were hardly water-tight; indeed, literary study was part of genuinely inter-disciplinary and multidisciplinary projects. This, indeed, had produced its own sense of institutional crisis, for the needs of an enlightened (and well-educated) reader had expanded to take in Kristeva, Barthes and Derrida, which left much less time for Milton, Dryden or Browning (to say nothing of Virgil, Sophocles or Horace) in an increasingly crowded syllabus. The Theory Wars of the previous decades were, however, often fought over straw gods; it was the idea of Humanism or Feminism that produced resistance, and convenient bogeymen were found to scare us into a retreat to 'accepted' and often unquestioned practices. When compiling the *Reader* in 2000, as now, we could not pretend innocence of the conflicts promoted in Universities, journalism and even government reports into Core Curricula, in Europe as well as elsewhere. It is just that the needs of sympathetic teaching and genuine debate should proceed as if partisan membership were not the order of the day. To this end, we judged, and I continue to conclude, that most interested readers required

a first-hand acquaintance with relevant and provoking material, where editorial intervention and *précis* were less pre-emptive and directive than in many Theory primers or guides. I also hope that the needs of a wide constituency of readers will be met by this collection: certainly those progressing through a formal Humanities education, but also those who are just drawn to strange and radical thought-processes, for the attractiveness of the journey itself.

'Theory', itself, is open to several varieties of definition and its study has often proceeded without a close examination of just what it could be taken to mean. After all, Rhetoric was studied in the medieval university *trivium*, so it has become something of a truism to claim that Theory has always been with us, and that references to Plato, Quintilian, Sidney, Shelley or Arnold prove it, but Theory has come to mean more than just a literature about writing and its effects; as Paul de Man noted, in his 1982 essay, 'The Resistance to Theory' (this edition, pp. 43–46), it is resisted most staunchly when it is taken to indicate an emphasis on 'reference prior to designating the referent' and a study of how 'reference [is] a function of language, and not necessarily as an intuition' (p. 437). From this perspective, the advent of a serious understanding of structural linguistics and its application to wider cultural issues, so conducive to such a non-humanistic project, could be seen to usher in a renewed engagement with formal and cultural languages (see the passage by Ferdinand de Saussure in this edition, pp. 42–50). Signs can only manifest meanings when the conventions, or *langue*, that provide the possibility of any comprehensible signification at all, are deciphered as constituting the specific traits of the individual utterance (the '*parole*');

... in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system.¹

Whereas the study of rhetoric aimed to improve the function of language and placed the orator at the centre of its operation, this perspective on language banishes the individual human agent from serious consideration.

These insights were not new for de Man, however. Saussure's lectures were collected together for publication in the *Cours* in 1915; the Prague Linguistic Circle (including Roman Jakobson) met most regularly from 1926 to 1939; Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Anthropologie structurale* was published in 1958, the same year that Laurence Scott's English translation of Karl Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (Leningrad, 1928) appeared. The vigour with which the structuralist template was applied, not just to literature, but also a wide range of cultural phenomena (such as fashion and film) was not just due to any intrinsic value in the analysis but rather its timeliness in the sixties and early seventies in dislodging outdated values or histories. No longer would the description of literary effect be explained

¹ *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (1959; rev. ed. Glasgow, 1974), p. 120. The original can be found in *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916), ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye; critical ed. prepared by Tullio de Mauro (Paris, 1972), p. 166.

by the evolution of artistic fashions or any distinctiveness in purely allusive self-reference; literature reflected a wider set of preoccupations than could be encountered in the theatre, library or seminar room. Readers were situated amongst synchronies of which they were only imperfectly aware – and these included the latent urgings of desire in the unconscious and the inherited (and apparently ‘natural’) roles imposed by gender and class.

A particularly fertile case study might be relevant here. In 1963, Roland Barthes published his study, *Sur Racine*, an assemblage of three essays, mainly inspired by psychoanalytical techniques, contributing to what he was to term, the next year, as *nouvelle critique* in an article, ‘Les deux critiques’ (*Essais critiques*).² What Barthes explores is the work of interpretation: how might we approach the literary work without immediate reference to the author’s biography or historical context? Is it possible to establish an interpretative method that is attentive to the work itself and its internal structures and linguistic patterns? Crucially, how can we assess the relation of fictional characters or situations to a sense of reality?

Whether intended or not, this precipitated a staunch response from Raymond Picard, who found the approach both obscurantist and unnecessary. In his *Nouvelle critique ou nouvelle imposture* (Utrecht, 1965),³ Barthes’s sins are basic ones: (a) he wilfully ignores Racine’s literal meaning, turning linguistic communication into a game of chance, (b) he uses jargon, where more accessible terms would have sufficed, and (c) ignoring the accepted limits to probable sense imposed by genre and psychological coherence as well as historical context, he refuses to recognize the path to objective truth about Racine.⁴ The debate would not have been half as interesting had it simply rested there. Picard’s seniority as a Professor at the Sorbonne gave the differences of approach the status of rallying-points. It stung Barthes into a protracted reply in his *Critique et vérité* (1966), a series of propositions that could stand a test of time (and, for some, familiarity) as a renewed apology for Theory. The attraction of normative language and principles of judgement is that they promote a criticism where much may go without saying and where discussions of method are sidelined and do not contribute to the real object of enquiry. This extends to an alternative grasp of just what the writer is about. Certainly, s/he may communicate and, given the aesthetic strategy, do so in a clear and apparently uncluttered way, but that does not mark out this idiom as in some way lifted out of the way of serious critical consideration, where even the attempt to use a simplified vocabulary is still an effect of style and thus has a metaphorical effect:

The writer cannot be defined in terms of his role or his value but only by a *certain awareness of discourse*. A writer is someone for whom language constitutes a problem, who is aware of the depth of language, not its instrumentality or its beauty.⁵

² *Sur Racine* (Paris, 1963); trans. as *On Racine* by Richard Howard (New York, 1964). *Essais critiques* (Paris, 1964); trans. as *Critical Essays* by Richard Howard (Chicago, 1972).

³ Trans. F. Towner, as *New criticism or new fraud?* (Pullman, Wa., 1969).

⁴ See Picard’s original work, pp. 66–70.

⁵ *Criticism and Truth*, trans. Katrine Pilcher Keuneman (London, 1987), p. 64.

For Barthes, the search is for the enigmatic within the text; for Picard, one should attempt the reverse: its ultimate dismissal.

This describes a recurrent divide within academic criticism, and one that has been helpful neither for Theory and, perhaps less predictably, nor for scholarship. If Theory turns its back on context and history, then it forsakes the details extrinsic to the text that a pursuit of knowledge might provide; if normative criticism remains innocent of its method, then it remains blind to its own assumptions and the merely relative status of its conclusions. More relevant, however, might be one of Barthes's concluding remarks in *Criticism and Truth* concerning the special ingredients of (a new) criticism:

... 'approaching' a text, not with one's eyes, but with writing, creates an abyss between criticism and reading, which is the very abyss which all meaning creates between its signifying aspect and the aspect which is signified . . . To read is to desire the work, to want to be the work, to refuse to echo the work using any discourse other than that of the work . . . To go from reading to criticism is to change desires, it is no longer to desire the work but to desire one's own language.⁶

This is a form of independence; it means that the task of the creative writer and scholar, whilst neighbouring that of the critic, by no means defines the approach or supplies suitable criteria of value. It is hoped that this collection exemplifies Barthes's defence of analytic criticism.

To this end, as in previous editions, I have selected seven routes through the material, although there are several overlapping terminologies and emphases, and, in the 'Cross-Reference' section included for each essay, links of a more individual kind are also suggested. I hope that these sum up what appear to be contemporary issues and interests, and that they bear, indirectly or directly, on literary study in its widest context.

Language, adaptation and translation

According to the Genesis myth (11:1–9), linguistic difference is a curse; the tower of Babel was destined to 'reach unto heaven' (11:4) and this divine emulation had to be curtailed by scattering the sons of Noah across the face of the earth by fragmenting their language. Once, 'the whole earth was of one language and of one speech' (11:1), but that did not survive this move to confound common understanding. One would look in vain for a clear reason in the account as to why the construction of the Tower was sinful, but it was associated with an attempt to create a city in that plain of Shinnar and, thereby, the inhabitants' desire to 'make [themselves] a name' (11:4). Naming brings forth identity – and power. Diversity – of the Word and the Self – is a decline from that happy state of simple being. There is even, in the New Testament, a partial redemption offered by God when the gift of tongues descends onto the Apostles and fills them with the Holy Ghost, so that they could deliver the Word of God without relying on their hearers' human interpretation to unearth its primordial sense (see Acts, 2:1–5). Suddenly, they can

⁶ *Criticism and Truth*, pp. 93–94.

speak to Cretans and Parthians, for example, in their own language, without the need for translation.

Christian culture is not alone in depicting some prior instinctual state where words did not refract or cloud intention and meaning.⁷ This mythic logic has it that linguistic systems are compensations for pure lucidity and instant revelation; St Paul interpreted his Pentecostal gift as contributing to an ideal society, where 'all . . . worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will' – not as he is capable of understanding (I Corinthians, 12:11). The more pressing task for present-day analysis, however, is how to regard the fact of linguistic variety, not just those that confront us across national or cultural boundaries, but also those sub-sets of dialect or discourse within more formal systems. In this, the linguistic mapping that, for example, dictionaries of German, Urdu or Mandarin provide is a very preliminary step. As Umberto Eco points out, translators must inevitably undertake to decipher some abstract, almost perfect, sense from the translated text so as to deliver it as intact as possible to the target audience; they must attempt this, however, without the mainstay of authority:

The criterion of textual relevance becomes more important when we are not dealing with the translation of isolated words but rather with the translation of sentences. If for isolated words there is a dictionary, sentences designate states of affairs which are not registered by any dictionary.⁸

Thus, one must have a heuristic sense of the whole as one deciphers the particular.

What applies to the transfer of meaning from one formal linguistic system to another is relevant to the process of adaptation from one cultural formation or one epoch to another. As Brecht and his collaborators realized when rendering the first scene of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* for their own audience, the question of authenticity, a merely literal or textual faithfulness to the source, does not fully serve the adapted work. Linguistic and grammatical congruence is not the same as the rendering of a text's emotional or tactical texture; indeed, a focus on the one might defeat attempts at conveying the other. This is part of what Michael Riffaterre acknowledges when he notes that the 'literary' nature of any text is bound up with its reliance on, and exploitation of, 'presuppositions' ('the implicit and requisite conditions of the text' [this ed., p. 474]), and what Walter Benjamin means by the distinction between 'kinship' and 'likeness' (this ed., p. 75) – the one indicating the departure from a source in order to render it better, the other maintaining a spare and literal linguistic equivalence that explicates only at a denotatory level.

What comes into view in these perspectives is a necessary expansion of significance for 'language'; as no linguistic system exists in a one-to-one equivalence with another, a translator or adapter – or, indeed, anyone interested in the survival of meaning – has to become conscious of the conventions and presuppositions that enable precise meanings. This is relevant not just to textual traces; graphic, aural

⁷ See George Steiner, *After Babel: aspects of language and translation* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 49–73, and Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat?: translation as negotiation* (London, 2003), pp. 173–93.

⁸ Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, p. 175.

or topographical meanings are similarly underpinned by often submerged myths or symbols. It follows that the formal study of language is not just an invitation to explore purely linguistic patterns; as Tzvetan Todorov, Julia Kristeva and Mikhail Bakhtin, in their various ways, demonstrate, poetics may often rely on the notion of separate textual forms, but this can only be supported by the most superficial signs. For Todorov (this ed., pp. 225–232), detective fiction can only be fully understood by recourse to noting dynamic typologies of plot, most evident in its popular instances; even when approaching the most pioneering examples of any form, their radical achievement is traced all the better against a backdrop of expected typicality, where they transgress the demands of ‘kind’. Kristeva’s attention to the semiotic tests any accurate assessment of ‘normal’ language and, indeed, goes beyond regular syntax and grammar to bring into view a ‘struggle between world and earth’ (p. 351). Parody, for Bakhtin, similarly surmounts a sense of stable semantics (pp. 235–63), and the scattering of tongues, so feared in the Genesis account, is actually creative:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue.⁹

As Roland Barthes makes clear, these signs constitute their own semiotic discourses with individuals – and it is the job of the reader/critic to explore this depth and complexity.

The Post-Modern

The term, ‘post-modern’, has come to characterize much of the late-century’s sense of its cultural orientation. Every attempt to define, or oppose, its guiding insights has returned to its distrust of grand, over-arching, narratives, the refusal to agree that language should aspire to transparency and so be instrumental, and, pre-eminently, the questioning that the human subject might be individualized and accurately self-reflecting, much like Descartes’s ‘I’ which can rely, at least, on consciousness, the thinking, perceiving and feeling *cogito*, to capture the Real. Here is the starting-point of reason – and its guarantee: that it can provide a bridge from the mind to external reality by a form of structured perception derived from initial doubt about all received wisdom. In Descartes’s *Discours de la Methode* (1637) and his *Meditations* (1641), it was exactly this ‘method’ that could almost ‘stand in’ for reality.¹⁰ As both Derrida and Lyotard have noted, however, to feel

⁹ ‘Discourse in the Novel’, in *The Dialogic Imagination: four essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; ed. Holquist (1981), p. 276.

¹⁰ *Meditations*, III.5: ‘Of my thoughts some are, as it were, images of things, and to these alone properly belongs the name IDEA; as when I think [i.e. represent to my mind] a man, a chimera, the sky, an angel or God. Others, again, have certain other forms; as when I will, fear, affirm, or deny, I always, indeed, apprehend something as the object of my thought, but I also embrace in thought something more than the representation of the object; and the class of thoughts some are called volitions or affections, and others judgements.’

you possess this sense of stability is not quite the same as having the means to represent or indeed to express it. Lyotard (here as regards the Kantian sublime) doubts whether the one might lead inexorably to the other:

Knowledge exists [for Descartes and Augustine] if, first, the statement is intelligible, and second, if 'cases' can be derived from the experience which 'corresponds' to it. Beauty exists if a certain 'case' (the work of art), given first by the sensibility without any conceptual determination, the sentiment of pleasure independent of any interest the work may elicit, appeals to the principle of a universal consensus (which may never be attained).

(this ed., p. 417)

Is there an entity that can be defined without some 'conceptual determination'? Or a response that calls forth a 'universal' assent free of the 'interest' (spiritual colouring, habit of perspective) that is often provoked by the work's rhetorical (i.e. linguistic) structure? Derrida's earliest post-structuralist thinking was guided by the need to 'turn' Descartes's hard-won faith in reason to sceptical indecision. In his *La voix et le phénomène* (1967), his focus is on Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, a study of the structures of experience and evaluation on which 'real', unmediated, perception might depend (see especially his *Ideas: general introduction to pure phenomenology* [1931]). In neo-Cartesian terms he sought to identify where we might 'bracket' off delusional, or unfixed, notions about the world so that the bedrock of experience might be studied. Derrida is quick to note that this 'phenomenological reduction', in Husserl's terms, is only possible if we can indeed locate the 'expressive' detritus of language (extraneous gestures or merely subjective colouring) as separate from the 'indicative' core imbued with an intentional force.¹¹ In short, the signifiers of language cannot be cordoned off from the intended signified: 'Whenever the immediate and full presence of the signified is concealed, the signifier will be of an indicative nature'.¹² This perception is taken up by several writers in this collection, notably Kristeva, Lacan as well as Derrida.¹³ It is but a small step to Lacan's concern that assertions of identity are not a case of 'knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am', but rather 'of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak' (this ed., p. 200). In the beginning was the word . . .

This refusal to countenance the mimetic function of signification has, as with all sceptical turns of thought, offered freedoms across many art forms. The weightlessness of the signifier contributes to the substitution of Derrida's preference for an awareness of *différance* (the endless deferral of finite meaning) for an investigation of how words (ideally) just clothe thought. For the author, we now find the (ever-deferred) 'authority' of a network or relay of contiguous traces. We do not ask who or what trans-individual need put them there. This has significant cultural consequences, and the post-modern has been at its most radical when it questions

¹¹ An excellent and succinct account of Derrida's demolition of these distinctions can be found in Christopher Norris, *Derrida* (London, 1987), pp. 224–37.

¹² *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston, Ill., 1973), p. 40.

¹³ See this ed., pp. 346–57, 184–209 and 210–24.

all claims to truth based on a Cartesian foundation, locating rationality as a most vagrant thing, demonstrated by mere assertion, once it is read closely enough. This can lead the post-modern writer to find the 'Real' to be a just a 'strategy' (Baudrillard, this ed., pp. 426–29), or the hallmark only of the 'presentable' (Lyotard, this ed., pp. 414–18), by which we find it a solace to locate a centre, or psychic guarantee, that would ground structure and order as in the nature of things (Derrida, this ed., pp. 210–24).

Objections to postmodernism rarely stand on the philosophical ground derived from these perceptions. As Fredric Jameson has repeatedly noted, 'difference' can be ideologically motivated and it has a general effect, no matter how privatized it may appear.¹⁴ In the essay selected for this collection, he itemizes several areas where the post-modern reacted to high Modernism and the avant-garde, reaching out to popular culture and consumerist energies, such as in advertising – and yet there are shared features with Modernism, too: a determination to disrupt classical Good Form and a penchant for pastiche and parody.¹⁵ The pre-eminent split is with what is taken to be the Enlightenment project of humanistic improvement and common-sense perceptions of reality. In practice, this is not quite the eighteenth-century variety that includes Voltaire or Hume's 'moral sense',¹⁶ for deep within Enlightenment enquiry is a similar distrust of Descartes to that found in Lacan and Derrida. For the eighteenth century onwards, however, the impulse was to replace doubt with an affirmation derived from a search, however circuitous, for truth and the guilt at not possessing this securely is pervasive in several writers apparently symptomatic of Enlightenment culture. For both de Man and Derrida (though in alternative areas), the most fruitful exchange is with Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), whose notion of man's natural goodness is consistently pitted against less than progressive systems of government (see his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* [1750] and his fictional plea for progressive education, *Émile* [1762]). Derrida, particularly, engaged Friedrich Nietzsche as his counter-authority to Rousseau's nostalgia for a primitivistic nature that pre-dates the snares of writing; he found there an unexpected celebration of being, a 'joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming,

¹⁴ See his *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London and New York, 1991), pp. 340–356, and Terry Eagleton's 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', in *New Left Review*, 152 (1985), pp. 60–73.

¹⁵ On this, see Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London, 1988), especially pp. 195–200, and Charles Jencks, 'The Post-Modern Agenda', in Jencks (ed.), *The Post-Modern Reader* (London and New York, 1992), pp. 10–39. For a wider sense of the socio-political impact of post-modern thought and aesthetics, see Jameson, *ibid.*, pp. 55–66, and Hutcheon's *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London and New York, 1994).

¹⁶ François-Marie Arouet [Voltaire] (1694–1778) and Robert Hume (1711–1776). Voltaire's support for religious tolerance was based on the assumption that all were capable of reason (see his *Lettres philosophiques* [1734]). Indeed, whilst not an atheist, he regarded religious adherence valid only in that it tended to promote social good and improving morality (see his *Dictionnaire philosophique* [1764]) Hume defended the role that the passions played in reaching moral judgements, even to the point of locating a 'moral sense' that actually formed our capacity to make moral distinctions (see Books 2 and 3 of his *Treatise of Human Nature* [1739–40]).

the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation' (this ed., p. 223).¹⁷

The post-modern has not lacked antagonists. For some, it is merely an inevitable staging-post in the Modernist revolution;¹⁸ for others, it lacks political responsibility – or perhaps it makes for a different politics and a new, less obvious revolution.

The subject and questions of agency

In Pliny's *Natural History* there are a string of anecdotes that pose uncomfortable questions about intention. For example, the painter Protogenes, frustrated at his inability to catch the appearance of foam on the mouth of an excited dog, cast his sponge at the canvas and, by accident, managed to depict it more exactly by chance than in all of the previous hours' contrivance.¹⁹ To the extent that our enquiries are valuable when assessing a creator's accountability for anything produced, this is a salutary tale, but, in this case, the creator's task is one of judgement as well as inspiration; the capacity to identify this effect of chance as apt and to adopt it in the final work now must count as 'intention'. Indeed, the enquiry as to exactly what is conscious about literary creation does not stop there, for any author might find the identification of just what s/he intended an immensely puzzling, or even an irrelevant, business in that such self-interrogation might just stunt the writing. But does this imply that the search for an 'intention' is besides the critical point?

A text presupposes an intention. With the tightening of the copyright laws in the eighteenth century,²⁰ this could more safely be ascribed to an Author (or Bookseller), someone who, in the eyes of the law, actually owns the intellectual property. What do we discover, though, when we identify an author – or an apparent (conscious) motivation? Given the propositions on identity outlined above, one could safely consider one's own sense of self – or anybody else's – as a syntactical arrangement: we all consider ourselves as distinct as grammatical subjects, our birth-names part an exercise of choice as well as lineage and which instil a consciousness of genetic individuality from birth. The process of naming is itself not identical to individuation, however, to our own DNA footprint, in modern parlance. Pragmatically, one needs to have one's own social code numbers to confirm accountability and one's

¹⁷ The Nietzsche text that best exemplifies this necessity for 'play' is *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), especially chapter 2, 'The Free Spirit'. For de Man on Rousseau, see his *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, 1979), especially pp. 135–301. Christopher Norris has provided a suggestive account of this debate in his chapter, 'Rousseau: Writing as Necessary Evil' in his *Derrida* (London, 1987), pp. 97–141. See also Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 68–77.

¹⁸ This is suggested by Fredric Jameson in his *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York, 1991), pp. 56–61, and Richard Wolin in the Introduction to his edition, *The Heidegger Controversy: a critical reader* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), p. xiii.

¹⁹ Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV, 102–3.

²⁰ See the summary by John Feather in his *Publishing, Piracy and Politics, an historical study of copyright in Britain* (London, 1994), pp. 64–96.

rights within, say, a system of tax or health care. Spiritually, if you are Christian, one believes that all have a soul, an imperishable core of moral responsibility. So, there are a number of contexts, or discourses, within which it is valuable to count oneself as distinct and self-generating. For the purposes of gaining an understanding of literature – indeed, all writing – this may not be so. In this collection, there are three essays that illustrate what is at stake when doubting the centrality of the concept of an author when attempting to account for discursive effects.

In the much-quoted 'The Death of the Author' by Roland Barthes (this ed., pp. 313–16), we only need 'authority' for pragmatic reasons; once we interest ourselves in 'writing', recourse to authorial intention becomes an unnecessary curtailment of free enquiry, an effect of the market: 'As soon as a fact is *narrated* no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins' (p. 313). This is especially the case once we look clearly at any literary creation, for, from Barthes's perspective, we do not find a 'single "theological" meaning', but rather 'a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash' (p. 315). The Author is thus a mere conduit for such bricolage. What fascinates Michel Foucault (this ed., pp. 281–93) about the 'author-function' is its utility within most humanistic study, its position within a system of classification – only partially evaluative and/or analytic – that tends to neater readings and that overrides the fact that writers may have multiple authorial selves, distributed across time (e.g. juvenilia as opposed to the 'mature' work) or across genre (e.g. the hasty penning of personal letters as opposed to heavily edited and revised published texts).²¹ Thus, the reading of any particular text is pre-empted and guided by the 'authorial text', that pattern of self-images and biographical proverbs that helps establish a certain correctness – or at least a decorum – about interpretation. In turn, reading the more dominant voices from a particular period (however defined) or from a chosen genre or 'school' of influence helps construct a discourse within which certain conclusions become 'true' or relevant in a self-fulfilling and circular way. For both Barthes and Foucault, writing exploits the symbol and its potential heterogeneity of address; 'authority' tends to establish meanings that can be safely thought of as messages or skilfully-delivered designs.

It would be tempting to regard these libertarian perceptions as providing merely a critical adventure playground, where the critical act was itself performance, a deploying of the creative imagination as telling as the literature that initially gave it cause. They allow rather more than that, for 'textual' readers refuse to have their understanding of texts clouded by considerations of intention, historical probability or the needs of textual integrity. In Barthes's distinction between a 'work' and a 'text', from his essay, 'From Work to Text' (1971),²² the effort to classify, date or

²¹ This could also hold true in the Renaissance, when personality was often subsumed by the need to exploit the resources of the acknowledged 'kinds' of literature. See Rosalie Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1973), pp. 2–31.

²² In *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London, 1977; orig. ed., 1971), pp. 155–64.

otherwise treat writing as historical (for it to count as a 'Work') is not invalid; it is just that such an approach would be at odds with the need to trace the multiple and often paradoxical filaments that run through the 'text'. There is a long history of schism between those who emphasize context and those who emphasize the internal contours of writing. Many recent histories of literary theory commence with the New Critics, active throughout the late nineteen-forties until the late sixties, and their uncovering of 'The Intentional Fallacy', the title of the famous W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley essay of 1946.²³ Being preoccupied with an author's intention is not true to recording the art of the work because it is in its very nature extraneous: 'One must ask how a critic expects to get an answer to the question about intention. How is he to find out what the poet tried to do? If the poet succeeded in doing it, then the poem itself shows what he was trying to do. And if the poet did not succeed, then the poem is not adequate evidence, and the critic must go outside the poem – for evidence of an intention that did not become effective in the poem.'²⁴ What marks out this critical discourse from both Barthes's and Foucault's is its reliance on textual cohesion, an important virtue that becomes a token of success. This is no empty formalism, however, but an 'achieved harmony' in Cleanth Brooks's phrase, often composed of micro-ironies and ambiguous details but all part of a constructed whole.²⁵ 'Writing', on the other hand, cannot be said to cohere in some form of global comment or pattern; its mode of existence cannot be deciphered by granting it some iconic or plastic state, even metaphorically.

For the first time the *Reader* includes E.D. Hirsch's riposte to those who prioritize semantic autonomy (that is, those who would try to free language from the intention that gave it utterance). If an interpretation is to be valid, then it must possess features that render it capable of validation – or of contradiction. Exit Author might simply mean enter Critic; for Hirsch, this is to relegate the texts we study to a process of relativist evaluation that ignores the conscious initial forces or mental processes that created the object of interpretation. There are crucial distinctions here: 'verbal meaning' is not to be confused with what the 'author "has in mind"', for the concern of the critic should be whether that 'verbal meaning' is accessible to interpreters; consequently, such 'meaning is an affair of consciousness and not of physical signs or things' (this ed., pp. 275, 278). Even the simplest of statements is capable of numerous interpretations; it is our responsibility to decipher the one possessing the intended meaning – even if this could not be clearly expressed by the actual author at the time of composition. This is not to deny that perspectives on the writing or a sense of its relevance might alter across time; it is just that any reading conditioned by temporal or perspectival relativism would just be a contribution to its 'significance'.²⁶ This distinction is similar to Barthes's when he

²³ In *The Sewanee Review*, 54 (1946), pp. 468–88. This was revised and re-appeared in Wimsatt's *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington, Ky., 1954), pp. 3–18.

²⁴ *The Verbal Icon*, p. 4.

²⁵ *The Well-Wrought Urn* (London, 1947), p. 159.

²⁶ See Hirsch's *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago, 1976), pp. 85–91. Valuable discussions of the context of these distinctions can be found in Burke, pp. 108–9, and Robert Holub's contribution to Raman Selden's edition of *From Formalism to Poststructuralism* (Volume 8 of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* – Cambridge, 1995), pp. 276–80.

notes that a 'work' might be, for example, classified, dated and given an allotted space on a library shelf, whereas a 'text' is a field of interpretation: we can be right or wrong about the former, not so about the latter. For Hirsch, the distinction between 'meaning' and 'significance' certainly valorizes the former, for 'to banish the original author as the determiner of meaning was to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation.' (this ed., pp. 267–68).

What all three writers skirt around in these essays is the issue of unconscious intention, that is, when the strategies or patterns willed in the text are not controlled by the conscious mind. This would be when the symbol (probably deployed by the writer for largely unexamined reasons) expresses a complex of meanings that are not resolved either by the critical reading or any obvious synthesis within the work. In order to engage with these unconscious (or sub-conscious) drives, the reader/critic would have to assume the role of an analyst encountering the mind of an analysand (the author) through the fantasy of her/his symbols and narratives. In Freud's sense (see the Introductory note to the Freud extract), the dream state encourages the displacement of anxieties and/or desires onto otherwise incidental references in the manifest dream; the process on the dreamer's part of making sense of these deep impulses is a form of secondary revision that always distorts the primal elements of the 'dream-work' and could be a flight from it. If you were to ask the writer, therefore, for an account of her/his fantasies, there would always be a movement towards self-censorship and euphemism. Indeed, Freud went so far as to claim that this involved 'unpleasure', and a process of divorce from the original 'thought-identity'.²⁷

Is our goal, then, a pursuit of an understanding of the primary or the secondary imaginative process? Ideally we would say, both, but Freud (and Freudians) also note that the model is not a developmental one: we do not improve in such knowledge when we attempt to decipher a dream in the (re-)telling, for there is superimposed a later train of associations (what the narrative 'must have meant') that actually distorts the psychical life of the dream as experienced. Hence the analysis of the 'dream-work' proceeds by way of associative re-discovery, as exemplified in the Freud extract (pp. 53–69). Freud, on the other hand, does not dispense completely with the 'intention' of the patient, as its identity cannot be known other than through the analytic process; it is just that it is a pretext for a process of telling – not re-telling – for the dream narrative items are altered at that point and the unconscious faced only for it to re-emerge in other forms: 'we must not concern ourselves with what the dream *appears* to tell us, whether it is intelligible or absurd, clear or confused, since it cannot possibly be the unconscious material we are in search of' (this ed., p. 62). Or, as Jacqueline Rose perceives in her critical encounter with Sylvia Plath (this ed., pp. 792–820), we might face that from which we are (consciously) in flight, yet cannot imaginatively and spiritually be freed.

For Jacques Lacan, it is this very sense of lack, constitutive of desire, that not only structures the language but ourselves as we use it. Our intuition that we are Subjects is actually given us by language, nor can we stand outside it so as to master it. Our desire for completeness and power is the motive for expression, and

²⁷ *Complete Works*, IV:757–69.

yet the linguistic signs we use in turn use us, providing the basic elements with which we conceive such needs; our sense of agency, our purposive individuality, is thus a linguistic trick, doomed to disappointment. Alternatively, Lacan does not regard the unconscious as a reflex that creates disorder alone and of which we may need a cure; far from this, it has a potential for imaginative energy and necessary identification. The 'Real' is something of a chimaera, towards which we feel we need to progress, but, in Lacan's terms, it is not that empirically verifiable 'reality' felt to exist by Cartesians, more a term (or intuition) summoned by one's 'imaginary' needs.²⁸

In several of the essays included in the *Reader*, Lacan's insistence on how the unconscious might be structured by, and within, language is adapted to a variety of projects. For Slavoj Žižek, the human subject gravitates towards a narrative position that is authoritative (near to the ego-ideal rather than the first person), hiding the inevitable split generated by desire. For fantasy to be enjoyable it must be segregated in its fictions from the everyday, so that the latter might be more plausible as the Real. It is only in this way that it can support our sense of equilibrium. Unexpectedly, the fantasmatic is the most constitutive item in our grasp on 'reality'. In her study of the wearing of the veil in Muslim culture, Meyda Yeğenoğlu assesses the impact for the Western gaze – interrogative and fantasizing – of such inscrutability. The object of the gaze is constructed, more fabric than organic, forcing the gazer to fantasize, ponder and so construct in turn. What both writers find in Lacan, and the psycho-analytic understanding of subject-formation, is that there might be collective fantasies deep within ideological effects.

The desire to account for the individuality of any piece of writing is thus only very provisionally accomplished by locating its author; for Freud, the patient is, indeed, the focus for psycho-analytic investigation, but the process of association and de-coding that is needed so that the significance of the dream or trauma is uncovered lies outside any conscious grasp. Furthermore, any typology of writing is transindividual, deriving not only from genre but also from deep mythic narratives. For Carl Gustav Jung and those most influenced by his views on myth, any perception of order is enabled by a projection of mythic coherence or an awareness of collective archetypes:

What we properly call instincts are physiological urges, and perceived by the senses. But at the same time, they also manifest themselves in fantasies and often reveal their presence only by symbolic images. These manifestations are what I call the archetypes . . . The unconscious . . . seems to be guided by instinctive trends, represented by corresponding thought forms – that is, by the archetypes.²⁹

Imaginative works are thus a performance of that same dynamic of desire that Lacan noticed structured the unconscious, yet one can trace wider patterns and networks both in how these urges are presented and also how they may be alleviated. Studies such as Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism; Four Essays* (1957) or

²⁸ It need not imply a failure in perception, however; for the most thorough exemplification both of its inexorability and its suggestiveness, see Catherine Belsey's *Culture and the Real* (2005).

²⁹ Jung, 'Approaching the Unconscious', in Jung et al., *Man and his Symbols* (New York, 1968; orig. ed., 1964), pp. 58, 67.

Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* (1957) have suggested a radical cultural project, where the bases of social semantics derive from how myth appears and is manipulated within various cultures.³⁰

This could be part of a less atomized sociological analysis, the search for, as Fredric Jameson had it in 1981, the 'political unconscious', where the decision to 'read literary or cultural texts as symbolic acts' is also to regard them as 'resolutions of determinate contradictions'. This would involve a 'rewriting' of a literary text 'in such a way that [it] may itself be seen as the rewriting or restructuration of a prior historical or ideological *subtext*, it being always understood that the 'subtext' is not immediately present as such, not some common-sense external reality . . . but rather must itself always be (re)constructed after the fact.'³¹ This would be a project that Jungians and Lacanians as well as Freudians could develop where the dream-state is not unlike the workings of ideology (see the contribution by Žižek in this ed., pp. 695–705).

History and place

The basic question for all literary historians is one that complicates all serious enquiries about causation: is history just a recording of what happened in some annal or catalogue, or is it an inevitable reconstruction, wherein a historian's judgement is called upon so that value is assigned and motives evaluated? For the historians of antiquity, the past was regarded as possessing shape. Tacitus felt that a historian's principal duty was 'to ensure that merit is recorded' and 'evil deeds' confronted by the 'fear of posterity's denunciations'.³² Polybius understood that 'fortune' had guided so much of history that a historian simply had to assemble all of the happenstance in one synoptic view so that the general purpose of the historical process might be brought before the reader.³³ The historian needed to mould the disparate facts and records so that order might be evident and justice prevail – and be seen to do so. As long as a historical record is provided by humans for humans values will be in the mix. Census records depend on the questions asked and the thoroughness of the investigation; treaties rarely itemize just why certain lands are valuable and others are not. Crucially, the complex question of when to start and end the history is also a matter of noting certain tendencies or hypotheses that fit the frame of the slice of history chosen. When did the French Revolution end? When the communards were ejected, or when their ideas became untenable? Has it ended?

³⁰ For Frye, the historical model is one of recurrent attempts to resolve shared anxieties, for the task of poetry is to 'illustrate the fulfilment of desire' by defining 'the obstacles to it'. All art is therefore a projection of 'the goals of human work' on the road to the satisfaction of such desire (*Anatomy of Criticism* [Princeton, NJ, 1957], pp. 106, 115). Barthes's understanding of myth is less humanistic in that he is more interested in the process whereby an apparently familiar form is given to what are in fact ideological postulates; meaning and form coalesce (see *Mythologies* [1957], ed. and trans. Annette Lavers [1972], pp. 111–24).

³¹ *The Political Unconscious: narrative as a socially symbolic act* (1981), p. 81.

³² *Annals*, III. ix.v.

³³ *The Histories*, I.iv.

For those cultural historians who have found an imposition of present concerns on the past misleading and the isolation of historical fact immensely difficult, the use of 'historical context' needs some method. The past is indeed a foreign country and previous generations did things differently – because they made sense of their world in ways that may seem alien to us. To explain the past is to appreciate its 'pastness' whilst at the same time being aware of how our own need for certain kinds of history might be responsible for how we ask the question. In Walter Benjamin's sense, 'historical materialism' tempers the need to supply grand causal schemes, such as evolutionary development or providential design, by a recognition of how much this ends up being just an apology for the value-systems favoured by the historian – or by who pays her/him:

A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing history. Historicism gives the 'eternal' image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past. (Thesis XVI of the *Theses on the Philosophy of History* [1950].)³⁴

Historicism overreaches itself in claiming that it describes regular laws that underpin any chosen succession of events; materialist history is happy to look at micro-evidence, traces of the past that run the risk of disturbing the *zeitgeist*.

For those who have accepted a New Historicist project, history might be opened up, the imaginations of past minds rendered in all of their possible alterity and the demarcation between 'literature' and its context dismantled. There could be as much fascination in the close examination of an Elizabethan government proclamation as in a sonnet by Shakespeare. In Clifford Geertz's phrase, the shards of the past emerge much like messages in bottles.³⁵ In its raw state, the language of the message is consulted but also the medium of transport: what kind of bottle? who wrote the words, and when? This is why so much of New Historicist work rests content with mixing up what had seemed so distinct: historical record on the one hand and literature on the other, for the problems of interpretation are similar in that both kinds of evidence are textual. This is not good news for those who depend on a turn to 'context' for some kind of tie-breaking decisiveness. In the agenda set by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, in their collection of essays, *Practicing New Historicism* (2000), there were four alternative principles to those accepted in historicist work: (i) the replacement of discussions about 'art' by those concerned with 'representations', (ii) a preference for studies on the human body and subjectivity over more overarching patterns normally associated with historicism (and even the cultural materialism of Benjamin), (iii) a refusal to dwell too much on the overt themes and tropes of the writing in question the better to concentrate on what had hitherto been regarded as 'supplementary' and marginal details (that can actually be more revealing in that they can be less rehearsed and monumental) and (iv) greater opportunity be granted for discourse analysis at the expense of critiques of ideology.³⁶ This is why Stephen Greenblatt,

³⁴ *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt; trans. Harry Zohn (1970), p. 264.

³⁵ In his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), pp. 7–8.

³⁶ *Practising New Historicism* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 10–17.

in his essay chosen for this collection (pp. 557–71), seems not to focus on aesthetic texts alone. To do so would imply that literary signifying systems were qualitatively different from others in the culture; all effects of a culture signify – or should be made to. Otherwise, we could not speak with the dead. This concentration on different logics, explanatory systems and distributions of power will, undoubtedly, result in fresh approaches to the literary sphere, if we any longer are interested in maintaining such a distinction.

There is another pressing reason why general history seems inappropriate as we now experience, and often celebrate, cultural diversity: that it is apt to obscure the voices of those who cannot often figure in official historical records. The difficulties in conjuring the voices of any subaltern class are discussed in Gayatri Spivak's contributions.³⁷ The globalism of economic expansion might lead us, in the developed world, to imagine that the world is gaining in a certain homogeneity, yet the right of capital and economic development to make the world amenable is problematic. In a very telling sense, the intuitions of place – and, metaphorically, of placement – are kin to those of all localized knowledge in that accounts of temporal change glide over the entrenched realities of national myth, geography and topography. This is part of the power of the veil in muslim cultures subjected to an uncomprehending, yet inquisitive Western gaze (see Meyda Yeğenoğlu's essay in this ed., pp. 707–28). Multi-culturalism entails a generous sharing of local totems, fixations and myths along with the more political desires for equal economic opportunity and even literacy. How we are 'placed' determines a great deal of what we regard as our identity and even what we may be permitted to express. For Frantz Fanon, black identity can only know itself once the white mask falls, both from the colonial oppressor and the oppressed. This is disconcerting, as unfamiliar a territory as that mapped by Simone de Beauvoir in her interrogation of the myths surrounding femininity (this ed., pp. 95–124). The result might indeed be a hybridity, deriving from generations of negotiation and assimilation between cultures,³⁸ yet, as Homi Bhabha notes, it also displaces the hierarchies that underpin an unwelcome *status quo*, where it could provide:

a *problematic* of colonial representation . . . that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority.³⁹

In Stuart Hall's sense, we even find 'new ethnicities' that grow from such encounters and that foster new creative energies (this ed., pp. 583–91). Any traditional

³⁷ See also her essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice' in Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Displacement of Culture* (1988), pp. 271–313 (orig. in *Wedge*, 7/8 (1985)), pp. 120–30.

³⁸ This has been explored by writers such as Wilson Harris (*The Womb of Space: the cross-cultural imagination* [1983]) and Edward Braithwaite (*Towards a Semiotic of Post-Colonial Discourse* [1989]) as well as critics such as Homi Bhabha, whose powerful plea for a positive cultural symbiosis can be found in 'Of Mimicry and Men: the ambivalence of colonial discourse', *October*, 28 (1984), pp. 125–33, and 'Signs Taken for Wonders: questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May, 1817', in *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (1985), pp. 144–65 (orig. in Francis Barker [ed.]), *Europe and its Others*, 2 vols. (1985), I: 89–106.

³⁹ 'Signs Taken', p. 156.

criticism that ignores the determining factors of 'place' would be unable to decipher that corrosive split between polite signifier and resistant signified.

To the extent that we are only partially aware of our 'placement', transcription or translation between cultures encounters not only linguistic barriers but those less overt, more to do with wider sociological customs and signs. For Edward Said, theory might travel from an anticipated cultural origin to another context and it may not vary linguistically in that movement, yet it cannot be proof against its appropriation for new uses and cultural functions quite distinct from any foreseen at its origin.⁴⁰ What was once vibrant and radical gets ritualized and potentially dogmatic. Deconstruction can become a privatized 'methodology'; feminism becomes a set of fashion tips for power-dressing, or environmental concerns transmute into an aesthetic preference for pastoral. 'Place' contains its own resistant assumptions and provides plots halfway through their own course and needs that can sometimes only be called forth when the new 'traveling' element arrives. To this end, history would provide us with some sense of cause and effect, but, as with Raymond Williams's exploration of the pervasive myths of country and city (pp. 339–45), it is possible to have distinct simultaneous 'histories', the new affecting life at different tempos in different contexts. In an unanticipated *renversement*, it is certainly the expectation in green politics that the future might be down-sized and more rural. For Green critics, the 'environmental imagination' is almost a political necessity supplanting the Left-Right axis with a novel political agenda that pits economic self-sufficiency against abstract state identity on the one hand and consumerist/multi-nationalist opportunism on the other. Lawrence Buell's definition and use of 'place' is unashamedly utopian, but, given the environmental threat, one could argue that salvation has to start somewhere, and his favouring of 'environmental texts' is part of a process of restoration 'by calling places into being, that is, not just by naming objects but by dramatising in the process how they matter' (this ed., p. 678).

It is not that the diachronies of historical process have fallen out of favour; it is rather that the linear has often been confused with evolutionary selection and teleological fervour; a sense of place puts a brake on such confidence in the name of necessary diversity, in racial, social and even biological senses.

Gender

In the first two editions of this *Reader*, gender issues were represented principally by a section on 'Feminism'. Whilst feminist critics have continued to pose challenging questions for the interpretation of literature, it has become increasingly the case that their net effect impinges on definitions of masculine identity and, indeed, the very ascription of a consistent sexual identity altogether to readers and writers alike. It is less that feminism has evolved into gender criticism, more that the basic feminist dissatisfaction with the legal, sociological and psychological strictures that formed sexual difference opened up wider semantic, and, thus, behavioural possibilities. Some sense of a Utopian future, where clear gender

⁴⁰ 'Traveling Theory', in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London, 1983), pp. 226–47.

identification would prove beside the point, is very much part of the conclusion to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929):

... it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. It is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause; in any way to speak consciously as a woman. And fatal is no figure of speech; for anything written with that conscious bias is doomed to death. It needs to be fertilized.⁴¹

In her fantasy of a writerly identity, *Orlando* (1928), the protagonist, in the twentieth century, becomes a woman, a wife, a mother and enjoys a career. Yet within the weave of this fiction are a few pulled threads, for the fantasy also alerts the reader to cast an eye on the actual conditions that inhibit women writers and readers. Women may not dwell on their grievances, less because it is incorrect behaviour than because it would be fruitless, and the fatal nature of gendered literary work – for women – is as much a fault conditioned by the patriarchal world of metropolitan reviewers and publishers as an aesthetic weakness. As the woman writer is advised to grasp at this transcendent mode of expression, it is not as if gender-awareness can actually be dissolved.⁴²

To some extent, the banishing of the myths about femininity that Simone de Beauvoir called for (see this ed., pp. 95–124) has robbed masculinity of its binary opposite, the Other, that helps define male independence and self-determination. What is brought into view is a diversity of gender roles that are no longer directly derived from anatomical difference; sex is not gender. This is problematic for 'second-wave' feminists whose political agenda foregrounds the effects of super-structural legal and political inequalities that promote prejudices enshrined in patriarchal practice, and for whom differing sexual experience is only discernible, male as opposed to female. For Kate Millett, in her immensely influential *Sexual Politics* (1970), it is no accident that the main forum for these debates is literary criticism, (for Millett) the optimum discourse for disturbing sexist ideologies. To this end, the main focus is on male writers, such as D.H. Lawrence or Norman Mailer, whose representations of sexual association are, more or less, influenced by a sense of 'penis-envy', the Freudian notion of the genital lack that marks the female.⁴³

To accomplish raw and necessary political ends a certain level of lumpen categorization is to be expected. There are conceptual limits to this degree of analysis, though, for there is much more to gender than the exposure of (alpha-)male blindness. As Woolf imagined, just as the canon is prised apart to allow the inclusion of

⁴¹ *A Room of One's Own*, 1929; ed. by Michèle Barrett, with *Three Guineas* (London, 1991), p. 94.

⁴² This is carefully developed in Stephen Heath's *The Sexual Fix* (London, 1982), pp. 137–68, and Carol Watts's 'Releasing Possibility into Form: cultural choice and the woman writer', in *New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts*, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London, 1992), pp. 83–102.

⁴³ This is most clearly expressed in Freud's 'Some psychological consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes' (1925) and his 'Female sexuality' (1931).

more female authors, the focus inevitably fell on the immense variety of such experiences and motives – not as a mere alternative to male normality, but in itself and for itself. As Hélène Cixous notes, it is now time to realize just what is involved in rejecting the phallogocentric tradition and in inventing ‘the other history’ (this ed., p. 363). Tracking this move, she notes the apparent irresponsibility of a feminine *jouissance*, a refusal to observe phallic Law and ordained Tradition for the pursuit of less chartable pleasures:

Her libido is cosmic, just as her unconscious is worldwide: her writing can also go on and on, without ever inscribing or distinguishing contours, daring these dizzying passages in other, fleeting, and passionate dwellings within him, within the hims and hers whom she inhabits just long enough to watch them, as close as possible to the unconscious from the moment they arise.⁴⁴

Gone from this *écriture féminine* are the narrative connections and consistent characterizations that mark acceptable fictions. In her famous essay, ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ (1975 – written for a special issue of *L’Arc*, dedicated to de Beauvoir),⁴⁵ this demands a constant questioning of masculine ‘knowledge’ and the language used to enshrine it. Where is the most authentic sense of self to be found for a woman? For Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, as well as Cixous, the search is for the distinct gendered female instincts and responses and not for some abstract human quotient. Kristeva’s own sense of the rhythms and phonic power of language, keeping at bay a recognition of the referent or signified, is here exemplified in ‘The Ethics of Linguistics’ (this ed., pp. 349–57), where Jakobson’s exploration for an epistemology of language study, how we know through language, is extended to all poetic signs: are they primarily message-bearing? Or can they connect, in their most material or oral/textual appearance, with deeper recesses of sense? The most complete accounts of this perception can be found in her *Desire in Language: a semiotic approach to literature and art* (1980) and *The Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), where the rite of passage that marks linguistic ‘maturity’ is actually a privation, where the formal systems of signification that serve the signified (in Kristeva’s term, the ‘symbolic’) erase the earliest, more primal, instincts (the ‘semiotic’) – and yet, this primary capacity for the momentary, the paradoxical or the incomplete does not disappear. Much like the return of the repressed, it is available as a rupture in the symbolic, overturning good sense. When reading the modernist work of James Joyce, Stéphane Mallarmé and Louis Ferdinand Céline, she uncovers adopted codes and tropes, allusions to other writers and other spheres of activity, a form of what Bakhtin knew as ‘dialogism’, an intertextual collage, that disturbs trust in a unitary subject.

As noted above, this feminist emphasis on intersubjective networks and on the constraints that actually provide us with a merely formal sense of the individual (not with an individualist style and accent), is an appropriation of Freud and Jung among others. For Irigaray, just as female sexuality is elided in normal social

⁴⁴ ‘Sorties’, in Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly-Born Woman* (Minneapolis, MN, 1986; orig. ed., 1975), p. 88.

⁴⁵ For English speakers, this is available in *Signs*, 1:4 (1976), pp. 875–93.

discourse, it fails to figure in imaginative literature; there is no particular reason to find a 'female' unconscious that might emerge, as the most pressing task is to create this more appropriate way of expressing this sexual identity. Far from escaping a maternal destiny, women must re-unite themselves with the Mother, both a real antecedent and also the Mother within:

We must also find, find anew, invent the words, the sentences that speak the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother, with our bodies, the sentences that translate the bond between her body, ours, and that of our daughters. (this ed., p. 539)

This is to supplant a *langue*, or formal language system, with a *langage*, a dialect or way of speaking. In this, she moves onto a terrain familiar to those who might have read Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) or Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: sexual arrangements and human malaise* (1976). This strand of feminism is heavily influenced by the psycho-analytical theories of Melanie Klein and Donald Woods Winnicott in stressing the centrality of the mother figure in character formation.⁴⁶ Reaching the Mother – either in kinship or in one's own psyche – is not to adopt a ready model, however, as it is the journey rather than the destination that matters: 'Never settle. Let's leave definitiveness to the undecided; we don't need it. Our body, right here, right now, gives us a very different certainty' (*This Sex Which is Not One* [1985], p. 214). We should remember that Virginia Woolf thought it essential for any woman writer to 'think back through our mothers'.⁴⁷

This insistence on a separate cultural and sensual history for women has led to researches into distinct literary histories and an alternative canon, where notions of universal literary value and canonical works are questioned. In creative work, the adoption of alternative forms of expression has helped develop a strand of post-modernist fiction that favours fantastic autobiography, fractured narratives and personalized myth. In critical terms, however, the move towards the recognition, and tolerance, of diversity across the humanities and social sciences has in turn led to the questioning of the bases of sexual difference, especially if we turn our attention to analyses that involve place and sexual orientation. Just as a 'third wave' of feminist thought has broadened its base to include wider cultural and sociological questions, French feminisms have been accused of ignoring racial and class difference. Take Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 'French Feminism in an International Frame', an essay for *Yale French Studies* in 1981.⁴⁸ Its plea for the more careful notice of pressing political issues vital to women in the Third World is a rebuke for the French feminists when they assume that a female psyche is undifferentiated in a global context. Take the wearing of the veil, an option (sometimes not) in muslim countries: for Meyda Yegenoglu, it is a complex gesture, more

⁴⁶ See especially Klein's *Love, Guilt and Reparation and other Works* (1977) and Winnicott's *The Family and Individual Development* (London, 1965), and *Babies and Their Mothers* (Reading, Mass., 1987).

⁴⁷ *A Room of One's Own*, p. 69.

⁴⁸ Collected in her *In Other Worlds: essays in cultural politics* (New York, 1988), pp. 134–53.

bound up with local political, national and religious imperatives and desires than can easily be appreciated by Western sympathies.⁴⁹

The same could be claimed for Queer or Gay criticism in that the polarized needs required by pressing struggles for rights and workplace tolerance, necessary for earlier-wave feminisms, have acted upon a binary sexual opposition. For Judith Butler, the spectrum of possible gender expression is wide and more gradually calibrated. However, the naming of femininity has a normative result, a case of regular discursive distinctions preceding, and taking precedence over, felt or intuited possibilities – such intuitions fading under such normative pressure (this ed., pp. 609–25). It is in this sense that gender roles are ‘performed’ and are ‘cited’ whenever gender distinctions are required for social conformity, or class or sexual solidarity.⁵⁰ For Jeffrey Weeks (this ed., pp. 643–64), in this post-AIDS climate of protectiveness and reticence, the whole set of sexual choices are less openly available. The expression of intimacy has been affected and, with it, the possibility, at the deepest levels, of social integration, which is not to say that it is impossible, just that it takes place using different conventions, which have consequences for literary portrayals and contemporary notions of verisimilitude.

Gender is not Sex; in this, the possession of sexuality is suddenly not as clear as it used to be. On a positive note, this has hardly been a loss for literature, as the more writers feel confident exploring a variety of gender roles, the more precise (and thus more expressive) will be the language and conventions that bring it into being.

The reader and the text

When Roland Barthes mapped the journey from Work to Text (see above, pp. 10–11), he realized that it rendered literature a field for interpretation: exit Author meant enter Reader. The Author may enter these deliberations but only as a guest, at the behest of the Reader, this largely because the goal of the activity was to ‘attain, and give itself over to, the spell of the signifier, the voluptuousness of writing’.⁵¹ There is more hinging on this readerly play than innocent gratification, though, as this ‘spell’ is a condition of meaning, where any signified is deferred and thus obscured:

To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept away towards further names; names invoke each other, come together, and their conglomeration calls out to be named anew; I name, I unname, I rename: thus passes a text: it is a nomination in the becoming, a tireless approximation, a metonymic project (*S/Z*, pp. 17–18).

⁴⁹ See too Winfred Woodhull’s ‘Unveiling Algeria’, *Genders*, 10 (1991), 112–31 and Fadwa El Guindi’s ‘Veiling Resistance’, *Fashion History*, 3 (1999), 51–80.

⁵⁰ Butler’s resistance to this pressure can be found in her essay concluding *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York, 1990), pp. 181–90, and also in ‘Promiscuous Obedience’ in *Antigone’s Claim: kinship between life and death* (New York, 2000), pp. 57–82.

⁵¹ *S/Z* (1970; trans. Richard Miller, 1974), p. 10.

It could be hinted at this point that Barthes is not sceptical about the possibility of 'meaning'; it is just that one cannot stem the tide. As one reads, meanings succeed and blend into each other; instead of shunning some that appear less probable or consistent, the Barthesian reader will simply give her/himself up to the flow, running the risk of the uncanny, bizarre or inconsistent.

Reading could, thus, be a process of 'unlearning', a refusal to narrow signification as an experienced reader is supposed to do. This is a post-modern Reader, and one that cannot take the footnote or writer's preface as authoritative; a world of scholarship falls away to allow a re-discovered intuition and vigilance greater space. Meaning, for Barthes, is unfixed in its very nature, as the shared codes that facilitate communication between writer and reader are so basic that they are drained of effective sense with every iteration. We are duped into thinking we know what this or that text is really about, but, in effect, this is actually a record of rather lazy short cuts. For Patrocinio P. Schweickart, one of the most pervasive abbreviations is to imagine that one is a universal reader, shorn of gender, class or that weight of connotations that establish us as we are; when confronted with the notion that any consistent or incremental meaning is impossible and that we are eventually prey to our own subjectivity, she fears that this would deny women readers (especially) the opportunity to establish a community of shared understanding;

Feminist reading and writing alike are grounded in the interest of producing a community of feminist readers and writers, and in the hope that ultimately this community will expand to include everyone . . . At this stage [writing in 1986] I think it behoves us to *choose* the dialectical over the deconstructive plot. It is dangerous for feminists to be overly enamoured with the theme of impossibility. Instead, we should strive to redeem the claim that it is possible for a woman, reading as a woman, to read literature written by women, for this is essential if we are to make the literary enterprise into a means for building and maintaining connections among women. (this ed., p. 50)

As is clear from the previous section, on the other hand, this hope of corporate enlightenment has been questioned from post-colonialist and queer perspectives. A distinction can be drawn, though, between some pre-emptive assumption based on biographical probability and one that includes an implicit awareness that the writer is reaching out to certain readers in a certain enfranchising way. To know that, say, a particular poem is by Wordsworth or by Dickinson does not directly help us to discover its semantic potential, but what Schweickart does not wish to surrender is the political potency of a consciously 'interested' reading, one that is aware of gender.⁵² Reading, for example, *Jane Eyre* for a course in 'Gender and

⁵² There is a vibrant literature on the gendered reader. Besides the essays included here by Cixous, Schweickart, Butler, Weeks and Sedgwick, see Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader* (Bloomington, IND., 1978), Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism* (Ithaca NY, 1982), pp. 43–64, David Glover and Cora Kaplan, *Genders* (London, 2000), pp. 121–56, Anne Cranny-Francis, Wendy Waring, Pam Stavropoulos and Joan Kirby, *Gender Studies* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 89–138.

Reading' is likely to provoke a different set of codes of understanding from those involved in the preparation for a seminar in 'Victorian Literature' or 'The Novel'.

What are produced here are, in Stanley Fish's term, 'interpretive strategies', that is, the production of semantic patterns as we read that are not called forth by the reading matter but rather by our acquired habits of reading. Indeed, he goes further in that, whilst we could agree on a consistent text of Milton's *Lycidas*, for example, that could hardly be the same as saying that we therefore read the same poem, for the real meat of the exercise would be how we approached the linguistic content, not whether the marks on the page (or, nowadays, the pixels on the screen) are identical for each of us (see this ed., pp. 383–400). The debate should now be not what can the lines mean, but rather, what do they do?⁵³ Consequently, he is more interested in the types of response that emerge from the critical act and that add up to a variety of 'interpretive communities' (see this ed., pp. 396–99) – not initially in a sociological sense (that is, readings common just to certain gender or class sectors of society) but in an epistemological sense:

A sentence is never not in a context. We are never not in a situation. A statute is never not read in the light of some purpose. A set of interpretive assumptions is always in force. A sentence that seems to need no interpretation is already the product of one . . . No sentence is ever apprehended independently of some or other illocutionary force.⁵⁴

Is it the case, however, that the Reader would always be surprised by verbal or narrative reversals, or by a work's capacity to ironize its own apparent aims? One could extend this query to Barthes's Reader, too: is it in fact the case that Readers constantly open up new horizons of meaning – or should they be instructed in this art? Is there not a propensity for order that underpins any actual reading experience? Do we not learn from previous readerly mistakes or fruitful indecision?

The text and the reader are in active negotiation as communication takes place, and the emphasis that most Reader-Response critics place on tracking and recording the actual process of error or defeated hypothesis develops a sensitivity for irony and an awareness of how writers manoeuvre always unwary readers. The ontological issues surrounding the work/text divide do not always mean that the text is dissolved merely into a reader's projections and cognitive habits. For E.D. Hirsch, the fact that there is a serial element in understanding a text's meaning does not erase its existence, both materially and conceptually. Indeed, his rejection of 'perspectivism' (this ed., pp. 265–68) relies on some constant elements in a writer's work. The search for a valid interpretation of writing avoids the mistake that 'identifies meaning with mental processes rather than with an object of those processes'. We may think that King Lear is a foolish old man up to Act III, yet it would be hard to support that as an exhaustive conclusion by Act

⁵³ Fish, 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics', *New Literary History* 2 (1970), p. 125. The aim of criticism is to trace the temporal unfolding of these strategies, the 'analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time' (ibid., pp. 126–27).

⁵⁴ 'Normal Circumstances, Literal Language, Direct Speech Acts, the Ordinary, the Everyday, the Obvious, What Goes without Saying, and Other Special Cases', *Critical Inquiry*, 4 (1978), p. 637.

V. Whilst we may all express our experiences of reading or seeing the play differently, that does not lead us to suppose that the play has been made over to us thereby: '*an unlimited number of different intentional acts can intend the same verbal meaning*'.⁵⁵ One is trying to trace a 'type idea' and experienced readers will do that more successfully than neophytes. The setting of boundaries validates one assumption and experience against another. Thus, the 'type idea' exists within a particular culture and is more available to those who know their culture well and can separate the extraneous from the integral: 'since a type can be represented by more than one instance, it is a bridge between instances, and only such a bridge can unite the particularity of meaning with the sociality of interpretation'.⁵⁶ This is not to say that the impact and significance of the whole is vouchsafed to us ready-formed, for one commences reading, of necessity, by hazarding guesses that are doubtless corrected the more we read on. There comes a point, for Hirsch, when we no longer need to guess and when we, in every sense, come to terms with the work, and can identify its 'intrinsic genre', 'the type that determines the boundaries of an utterance as a whole'.⁵⁷

This role for the reader is actually a way of identifying the codes of intelligibility, part taught, part intuited, that provide the basis for interpretation. It is inspired by the structuralist ideal of accounting for literary effect by drawing up a modal inventory of binary oppositions between residual and transgressive or emergent tropes: we cannot recognize the latter without producing tables of the former.⁵⁸ We are some way, though, from a phenomenology of reading and the inclusion of the famous Wolfgang Iser essay, on the 'Reading Process', exemplifies, alongside the Fish and Bakhtin items, just how readers react to complex signs and allusions. For Bakhtin, any utterance is inescapably 'dialogic' in that it draws the reader into a relationship with previous discourses as it appears to gesture to an outside world. Iser, similarly, sees the reader as co-opted by the text s/he is reading to fill strategic lacunae with implied messages. It is the text, though, that is the motive force; readers may be subjective, but the 'process of assembling the meaning of a text is not a private one, for . . . it does not lead to daydreaming, but to the fulfilment of conditions that have already been structured in the text'.⁵⁹ For Riffaterre, the locus of meaning, its creative force, lies in the reader's mind, yet under conditions instilled by the text. We come to boundaries once again – and a complex and perhaps oblique recognition of intention.

Is the text now as delimited as Hirsch and Fish (amongst others) make out? I say, now, in that the identification of a text as contained, or at least generated, by a hard-copy volume, pulp and printer's ink, is increasingly qualified by electronic competitors, not just email attachments, but hypertext displays where the search

⁵⁵ *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, 1967), pp. 32, 38.

⁵⁶ *Validity*, p. 71.

⁵⁷ *Validity*, p. 89.

⁵⁸ This link with a structuralist poetics was most clearly advanced by Jonathan Culler in his *Structuralist Poetics: structuralism, linguistics and the study of literature* (London, 1975), pp. 113–30, where he termed the 'repertoire of conscious and unconscious knowledge', without which writing would be unintelligible, one's 'literary competence'.

⁵⁹ Iser, *The Act of Reading: a theory of aesthetic response* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 49–50.

for the 'best' or most 'authentic' version of any work is held in abeyance: let the reader decide. Jerome McGann's survey of the 'Textual Condition' (this ed., pp. 574–80) does not rest easy with any one text as a representation of an author's 'intention', for any editor has to be prepared to judge the relative claims to authenticity of several versions or editions or manuscripts or impressions that help us appreciate the complex route to any 'final' printed form. Reading becomes a dispersed activity once we lose confidence in a unitary textual form. This is illustrated (this ed., pp. 731–50) by reference to developments in Shakespeare scholarship in David Scott Kastan's description of how any playtext resists the imposition of a 'final form' that would bridle performance and make it predictable in serving some 'master-text'. What we have are traces of Shakespeare, and his ghostly presence, night-by-night in performance, edition by edition in the library. It is not that there is no author; it is rather that there are too many.

Non- and Post-Theory

By way of a conclusion, it should have become clear that it is not my view that Theory has expired. I started by asserting that Theory (the initial capital is important) actually means studies focussed on the complexities of language and its determining role in identity-formation. In an eerie return to the Picard–Barthes debate, Valentine Cunningham's call (this ed., pp. 772–89) for greater critical tact (and vigilance) seems rather like Picard's sense of what criticism should be about, where the search for probable authorial meaning might be re-instituted as a critical consensus, yet he also is capable of praise where it is due, and in the chapter, 'The Good of Theory' in *Reading after Theory*,⁶⁰ he feels that it would be as well to testify to the way that reading has become so much more alive 'under the impact of Theory': 'texts have in many ways become so much more vividly present, so much richer and deeper, in their newly acquired valencies'.⁶¹ The trouble is that this new facility for eye-catching novelty is also a charter for overreachers and he knows one when he sees one.

Without some shared sense of what is involved in close technical and cultural work it is possible that criticism would simply become a rather parochial business. It would fail to engage the whole of the reader, just that sector of the memory devoted to previous literary encounters, ignoring the whole cultural, political, religious or gender sensibilities that are brought (no matter how hard we may try to exclude them) to the reading or spectating. A post-theory age would doubtless be an innocent one, and Terry Eagleton is aware of those who were waiting just for this outcome, yet his understanding of 'Post-Theory' does not relieve us of the need to interrogate texts and how they figure in cultural formations (see this ed., pp. 824–34). A re-vivified cultural studies may provide a Theoretical plank on which to cling, but it is not always clear that the same is meant whenever culture is mentioned in the phrase.

⁶⁰ (Oxford, 2002), pp. 38–53.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

In Donald Morton's wide-ranging assessment of the future of Theory, 'Transforming Theory: Cultural Studies and the Public Humanities',⁶² he looks forward with some confidence to the contest between a privatization of our social selves and expressive opportunities on the one hand and a more collectivist investment in cultural studies, where the private is always to be regarded as the public, on the other. Commerce favours and sponsors humanistic projects that enshrine the particular and a private aesthetic. As Lyotard feared, charitable foundations feel safer funding research that contributes to knowledge, to be sure, but that also compartmentalizes it and manages it so that it is likely that 'outcomes' will be predictable. It becomes 'information'. For Morton, Cultural Studies takes issue with any line of enquiry that places the 'aesthetic particular' firmly in view as the object of analysis: for example, just Walt Whitman's verse-forms or Jane Austen's life as reflected in her works. To account for Whitman or Austen's motivation, or to estimate how they both understood and addressed their readers, either intended or just simply inexorably, demands more of the critic and cultural analyst. This carefully-weighted programme implicitly provides an agenda wherein the post-modern distrust of publicly-available meanings is to be confronted by a sense of critical responsibility and commitment.

'Culture' either means something specific – far more precise than any lexicon could provide – and, therefore, has to take its place within a technical set of distinctions, a specialized discourse, or it is functionally merely an umbrella-term for any cluster of materialist or New Historicist assertions. Morton implicitly looks back to Raymond Williams's hope that a renewed 'cultural studies' might place the study of literature within a much wider frame of reference.⁶³ Within it lies hope, Williams felt, for the general health of a community:

A culture, while it is lived, is always in part unknown, in part unrealised. The making of a community is always an exploration, for consciousness cannot precede creation, and there is no formula for unknown experience. A good community, a living culture, will, because of this, not only make room for but actively encourage all and any who can contribute to the advance in consciousness which is the common need . . .⁶⁴

What remains now is a set of values much beset by the fracturing effects of all privatized behaviour, where a state or multi-national corporation disguises itself as the friend of smaller, self-determining, social units, or simply as a consequence of cable TV and internet chat-rooms. That this nexus of values might still be revived appears forcefully in Terry Eagleton's return to Williams's concepts in his *The Idea of Culture* (2000), but it is a return with a difference. What seemed possible in 1958 was that cultural critique might influence social policy directly; this is increasingly deemed wishful thinking. Eagleton goes further: we now need to realize what cultural critique cannot accomplish, to register those claims for it

⁶² In *Critical Studies: Post-Theory, Culture, Criticism*, (vol. 23) eds Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 25–47.

⁶³ His most sustained examination of what it has, and could, mean can be found in his *Culture* (1981), especially pp. 9–32.

⁶⁴ *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (1958), p. 334. This cannot be planned, however, and must, therefore, mould and participate in the future by recapturing the past.

that are 'immodest and overweening', and be satisfied with what it can confront, the factors in modern life that sever the ties of kinship, affection, memory and place. Principally, such theory needs to emerge out of and serve 'an enlightened social context' where such ties are tempered by 'more abstract, but also in a way more generous, affiliations'.⁶⁵

This is not the only reason to be cheerful. Just as the postmodern moment has spread distrust of metanarratives, then the explanatory pretensions of a lot of what has been claimed to be Theory (capitalized) have been deflated. One can be manic or depressive about this. Both Eagleton and Cunningham (in this collection) realize that reading after 'Theory' is not exactly a return to previous sanity. Our sense of self and art has moved on from the relatively innocent value judgements and intransitive academic literary histories of the mid-twentieth century. Thomas Docherty's vigorous exploration of the new order in his *After Theory* (1996) is unrelenting in its depiction of the fated hopes of marxist social analysis, identifies it with the modernist project to provide a rational grasp of social change, and replaces their attempt at order with a thrilling scene of transgression, (artistic) violence and seduction. Art can do this, but is shackled by mind-forged barriers, often policed by the territorial needs of 'culture'.⁶⁶ In a quite different vein, there has been a call for a 'democratic criticism' that invokes humanistic responsibilities. In Edward Said's posthumously published *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004) the time seems right for intellectuals to take on more of a public role in negotiating a better social and political order, yet he stressed 'the absence of any master plan or blueprint or grand theory for what intellectuals can do and the absence of any utopian teleology toward which human history can be described as moving'. One is left with the task of hypothesizing 'a better situation from the known historical and social facts' (p. 140), and actively promoting it as a reality. But these are the more engaged and positive analyses; Alexander Stille's warning about our capacity for historical amnesia in the 'Information Age' (this ed., pp. 752–70), coupled with Baudrillard's more sanguine acceptance of contemporary cultural simulations are two sides of the same coin; the Gulf War is not prevented by claiming that it did not take place in the common understanding of the term, but could an improved literary awareness have prevented it in any case? At a time when senior voices are claiming that a lack of certainties and methodological consistency discredit the whole discipline of 'English',⁶⁷ it would not do simply to embrace post-theoretical excitement without recognizing its 'worldly', pragmatic consequences.

⁶⁵ *The Idea of Culture* (2000), p. 131.

⁶⁶ See the chapter on 'Deterritorialisation: Ending Culture', pp. 204–25: 'In literary terms, modernism is about the discovery of a tradition or of a national voice which one can claim as one's own; in the postmodern tradition, one speaks always with the tongues of others in one's ear/throat' (p. 205).

⁶⁷ See especially Gayatri Spivak's sobering *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: towards a history of the vanishing present* (1999) and her *Death of a Discipline* (2005), Eugene Goodheart's *Does Literary Studies Have a Future?* (1999); Robert Scholes's 'The Humanities in a Posthumanist World', *PMLA*, 120 (2005), 724–33, and Brian Boyd's 'Theory is Dead – Like a Zombie', *Philosophy and Literature*, 30 (2006), 289–98.

Certainly, the linguistic confusion that complicates clear critical and analytic judgement is meat and drink to creative writers – especially those with a penchant for satire – and the growth in qualifications available for deconstructive and gender-confused imaginative writing is possibly not yet at its peak.⁶⁸ There are, after all, pressing international problems to attend to, and the golden age of Theory would appear to have passed. Commitment, feeling and intuition have not disappeared, however, and it may not be too late to capture something of that dissidence that Alan Sinfield felt should be encouraged by the professional academic, where we might ‘break out of the professional subculture and work intellectually (not just personally) in dissident subcultures’.⁶⁹ For that to happen there must be some shared sense of why that should happen as a matter of principle, not as some lifestyle choice – and that involves theory (without the initial capital).

In the Library of Babel, Jorge Luis Borges depicts a life spent in a universe of books; indeed, the universe is a library of infinite shelving and carrels (or infinite-seeming – which is the same thing). There is a sense that librarians are becoming fewer at the same time as the quest for enlightenment is increasing in its feverishness:

When it was proclaimed that the Library contained all books, the first impression was one of extravagant happiness. All men felt themselves to be the masters of an intact and secret treasure. There was no personal or world problem whose eloquent solution did not exist in some hexagon [division of the building]. The universe was justified . . .

Depression sets in, however; there are inquisitors who are set the task to uncover the deepest secrets of life within the covers of the best books, but some wish to decree that their search should cease and some wish to slim down the store of volumes by removing useless or misguided items. The search is never a disinterested one, and the price paid is sobering; there are suicides, and rumours of suicides – the library will endure, whilst man, perhaps, will not:

The methodical task of writing distracts me from the present state of men. The certitude that everything has been written negates us or turns us into phantoms . . . I suspect that the human species – the unique species – is about to be extinguished, but the Library will endure: illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret.⁷⁰

Written well before the availability of the internet, the tale takes account of the intellectual riches offered by an infinite archive and contrasts it with the human reality of ever-deferred arrival at the Grail and the distraction from ‘the present state of men’. When experience becomes increasingly virtual, solitariness and uselessness must be weighed in the balance alongside the promise of incorruptibility and infinity. What are the virtues of a ‘perfectly motionless’ state?

⁶⁸ See Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Future of Theory* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 117–40, where he imagines a future where we will read more Theory as literature not of literature.

⁶⁹ *Faultlines: cultural materialism and the politics of dissident reading* (Oxford, 1992), p. 294.

⁷⁰ Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: selected stories and other writings*, eds Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (1964), pp. 82, 85.

At its most provoking, any theoretical approach to reading is revelatory, even if we may eventually be driven to refute it. We might escape the rehearsed and repetitious, even as we identify first principles of liking or disliking. Post-theory is really Post-Theory, that movement beyond formulaic blocs of rules and, in less optimistic vein, communally liberating *schema*, the hallmark of 1968 and its legacy. Perhaps this is inevitable: once theory, or any criticism for that matter, loses sight of the spiritual needs of individual readers, there is a tendency for schools of thought to lose their pupils. Thus, when Roland Barthes reviewed his intellectual career, from the demystification of *Mythologies*, to the embracing of semiological science to the incorporation of the 'claims of the body' to supplement this 'rational imaginary', and finally to the search within by means of autobiographical confession, he realized that the literary text is inexorably at risk from a hermeneutic paralysis: 'it repeats itself, counterfeits itself in lusterless texts, testimonies to a demand for readers, not for a desire to please: the Text tends to degenerate into prattle. Where to go next? That is where I am now'.⁷¹ But that is not the most hopeless position to be in.

In Umberto Eco's homage to the thought of Theodor Adorno, his parodic essay, 'The End is at Hand', the apparently apocalyptic scene is set in Classical Athens at its democratic height, the age of Thucydides and Pericles. However, the narrative *persona* can foresee only decline; Aristotle's *Poetics* have hardened into Law and his *Rhetoric* is a mechanical pushing of tropic buttons:

... artistic production now bears the heavy yoke of industrial necessity, and crafty mass-man [the citizen given democratic opportunities] has slyly transformed that necessity into choice. Art bows to the laws of science: among the columns of temples you now see golden proportions established, which the architect hails with the enthusiasm of the surveyor; and Polycletus supplies you with a 'canon' for the production of perfect, industrialized statuary ...⁷²

And yet art has prospered; Aristotelian tragedies and rhetoric have not stifled invention. Eco realizes that there is no shortage of where to go next?

We might live in a time, if not of 'slackening', as Lyotard observed, then of retrenchment. There is a New Humanism and yet information abounds, obliging the researcher to make sense of, and find relevance for, it. The Age of Hypertext does not just provide an appendix to a handbook for textual editors, as it heralds an alternative to the fixity and linearity of traditional concepts of reading and of the book as a commodity.⁷³ The politics of access, recently focussed on the stirrings of opposition to the cyberworlds of Microsoft and Google, is a familiar issue and its prominence reminds the book historian of similar debates about those guarded archives that composed the finest libraries of the past. The ability to

⁷¹ Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Howard (1977; orig. ed., 1975), p. 71.

⁷² *Misreadings*, trans. William Weaver (1963; orig. ed., 1963), p. 113; cf. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's 'The Culture Industry: enlightenment as mass deception', in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (1972; orig. ed., 1944), pp. 120–67.

⁷³ See George P. Landow, *Hypertext: the convergence of contemporary critical theory and technology* (1992).

marshal the newly-searchable evidence that electronic databases provide might come accompanied by warnings about their principles of composition and their inevitable excision of the actual bound bibliographical item, yet it forces us to develop theories about archive-formation and use, and that task is still in its infancy.⁷⁴ That is just one area to which we might go next, and this Reader will have accomplished something if it provokes renewed attention to critical awareness and relevance, and suggests other directions as well.

⁷⁴ A significant attempt at this is provided by Franco Moretti in his *Graphs, Maps, Trees: abstract models for a literary history* (2005), where he tries to exemplify 'distant reading', instead of 'concrete, individual works', the cornerstone of the analysis is the inductive models of enquiry that help us explore connections and interactions – at once abstract, but also rendered graphic and visual.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Introductory note

Marx (1818–1883) and Engels (1820–1895) first met in Cologne in 1842, but their most productive working period was in Britain from 1845 on, in both Manchester and London. These extracts from *The German Ideology* (written, 1845–46; published, 1932) illustrate what they regarded as a materialist view of history in their first large-scale attempt to formulate the bases of their disagreement with the ideas of G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) and his imitators, the young Hegelians. Principally in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Hegel had conceived of the historical process as the working out of a dialectic whereby meaning and truth are never fixed entities, but are rather staging posts in a progress towards a basic unity or *Geist* ('Spirit') when there would be an absolute knowledge that the world was really an emanation of spiritual understanding or contemplation. Reason is an important tool in this, but it is only that: *Geist* is the highest form of enlightenment, and its attainment is the goal of all historical striving, a process of periodic *Aufhebung*, or upheaval/cancellation that introduces emergent social forms amidst residual practices – but the motive force is thought guided by reason.

This reassuring sense of history, that it is a record of gradual improvement as Man develops an awareness of others, reflected well on much of the nineteenth-century's rapid material progress, yet Marx and Engels were more struck by the unequal distribution of its benefits, and that history seemed to provide more of an account of material struggle and occasional decline. The theory of history they favoured is most clearly expressed in the Preface to Marx's *A Critique of Political Economy* (1858–59), where a consideration of 'material conditions of life' is a way of understanding many abstract and apparently separate beliefs: 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.' Furthermore, in order to be socially and materially productive (in 'the social production of their life'), Man enters into 'definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will' (*Karl Marx: selected writings*, ed. David McLellan [1977], p. 389) The basic – and systemic – economy of life, how one produces and under what conditions, is the prime motive force, refracted within superstructural prohibitions and supposed freedoms allowed by legal and educational systems as well as religious codes. The Base determines human behaviour in ways that are often hidden from individuals by superstructural forces that give the impression that they are open to change and evolution; if they are, then their effect will not be significantly different so long as

the capitalist system prevails. In many of the writings collected together in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (first pub. in 1932; trans. 1959), it is clear that Marx was struck by the alienation that the working classes experienced, a desperation so deep that it created a hopelessness about any changes to their condition. Appropriating the work of Ludwig Feuerbach, most consistently his views in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), Marx and Engels drew a clear line between their investigations and the Enlightenment faith in rational self-improvement, noted in Rousseau and Condorcet as well as Feuerbach. The object of philosophy is to have a material effect on the conditions of life, not to accustom men and women to their lot. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) and *Capital* (vol. 1: 1867; trans. 1886; vols. 2 and 3: 1885, 1894 [ed. Engels]; trans. 1907, 1909), Marx and Engels developed their sense of the workings of ideology, its inevitable and pervasively restraining forces of containment. In short, history moves forward towards an eventual overthrow of this system through a process of dialectical materialism, that is, a set of antithetical turns, action and reaction, all conditioned ultimately by materialist concerns – and not in accordance with a rational and incremental grasp of the situation, where individuals can be sure to determine the course of events.

The German Ideology never found a publisher in its authors' lifetimes. (It eventually appeared in 1932.) It is a clear expression of just what the 'realism' of their undertaking might be, how investigations should start at those social relations that determine how artists produce art, how it is distributed, how it is read or seen, and how it reflects a relationship to prevailing ideology. To this end, art can never be disinterested or simply created for its own sake. Artists may indeed believe that, but a materialist analysis will show that that is a faith that rarely survives the study or studio. Artworks have a place in a real world, and even the most spiritual sentiments take a particular form in it, derived from actual labour in its production. Raymond Williams was to extend this sense of materialist perspective to the practice of imaginative creation; the book is a product, part mental, part physical, and its presence in the canon (now) and on the bookshelves then as now, is not an effect of natural selection, but rather the effect of certain interests (see his 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory' [1973]). The raw materials for artistic production are transindividual, even if expressed in an apparently original way: 'we have to break from the common procedure of isolating the object and then discovering its components. On the contrary, we have to discover the nature of a practice and then its conditions' (*Problems in Materialism and Culture* [1980], p. 47). The most significant works are, therefore, not simply those that deploy strikingly original or complex art, but those that allow readers or spectators to realize the specificity of their historical situation and that strengthen a belief in collective human action and possibility.

Cross-references

- 7 Fanon
- 9 Brecht
- 15 Foucault
- 18 Williams
- 21 Said

33 Jameson
48 Eagleton

Commentary

Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (1965; trans. 1969)

Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in his *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1970; trans. 1971)

Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory' – first given as a lecture in Montreal in 1973, then written up for *The New Left Review*, 82, (Nov.–Dec., 1973), and reprinted in Williams's *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (1980), pp. 31–49

Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (1977)

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Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: an introduction* (1991), especially pp. 63–91

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The German Ideology

PREFACE

Hitherto men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions about themselves, about what they are and what they ought to be. They have arranged their relationships according to their ideas of God, of normal man, etc. The phantoms of their brains have got out of their hands. They, the creators, have bowed down before their creations. Let us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas, dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they are pining away. Let us revolt against the rule of thoughts. Let us teach men, says one, to exchange these imaginations for thoughts which correspond to the essence of man; says the second, to take up a critical attitude to them; says the third, to knock them out of their heads; and – existing reality will collapse.

These innocent and childlike fancies are the kernel of the modern Young Hegelian philosophy,¹ which not only is received by the German public with horror and awe, but is announced by our philosophic heroes with the solemn consciousness of its cataclysmic dangerousness and criminal ruthlessness. The first volume of the present publication has the aim of uncloaking these sheep, who take themselves and are taken for wolves; of showing how their bleating merely imitates in a philosophic form the conceptions of the German middle class; how the boasting of these philosophic commentators only mirrors

¹ Exemplified by Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) and Max Stirner's *The Ego and its Own* (1844), the Young Hegelians regarded human action as the result of an unfolding of mind or spirit (*Geist*), a potential that, eventually, could be said to guide all action and material development.

the wretchedness of the real conditions in Germany. It is its aim to debunk and discredit the philosophic struggle with the shadows of reality, which appeals to the dreamy and muddled German nation.

Once upon a time a valiant fellow had the idea that men were drowned in water only because they were possessed with the idea of gravity. If they were to knock this notion out of their heads, say by stating it to be a superstition, a religious concept, they would be sublimely proof against any danger from water. His whole life long he fought against the illusion of gravity, of whose harmful results all statistics brought him new and manifold evidence. This honest fellow was the type of the new revolutionary philosophers in Germany. . . .

THE PREMISES OF THE MATERIALIST METHOD

The premisses from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premisses from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premisses can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premiss of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself – geological, oro-hydrographical, climatic, and so on. The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion, or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.

This production only makes its appearance with the increase of population. In its turn this presupposes the intercourse of individuals with one another. The form of this intercourse is again determined by production.

The relations of different nations among themselves depend upon the extent to which each has developed its productive forces, the division of labour, and internal intercourse. This statement is generally recognized. But not only the relation of one nation to others, but also the whole internal structure of the nation itself depends on the stage of development reached by its production and its internal and external intercourse. How far the productive forces of a nation are developed is shown most manifestly by the degree to

which the division of labour has been carried.² Each new productive force, in so far as it is not merely a quantitative extension of productive forces already known (for instance the bringing into cultivation of fresh land), causes a further development of the division of labour.

The division of labour inside a nation leads at first to the separation of industrial and commercial from agricultural labour, and hence to the separation of town and country and to the conflict of their interests. Its further development leads to the separation of commercial from industrial labour. At the same time, through the division of labour inside these various branches there develop various divisions among the individuals co-operating in definite kinds of labour. The relative position of these individual groups is determined by the methods employed in agriculture, industry, and commerce (patriarchalism, slavery, estates, classes). These same conditions are to be seen (given a more developed intercourse) in the relations of different nations to one another.

The various stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of ownership, i.e. the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument, and product of labour.

The first form of ownership is tribal ownership. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts, or, in the highest stage, agriculture. In the latter case it presupposes a great mass of uncultivated stretches of land. The division of labour is at this stage still very elementary and is confined to a further extension of the natural division of labour existing in the family. The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family; patriarchal family chieftains, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter.

The second form is the ancient communal and State ownership which proceeds especially from the union of several tribes into a city by agreement or by conquest, and which is still accompanied by slavery. Beside communal ownership we already find movable, and later also immovable, private property developing, but as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership. The citizens hold power over their labouring slaves only in their community, and on this account alone, therefore, they are bound to the form of communal ownership. It is the communal private property which compels the active citizens to remain in this spontaneously derived form of association over against their slaves. For this reason the whole structure of society based on this communal ownership, and with it the power of the people, decays in the same measure as, in particular, immovable private property evolves. The division of labour is already more developed. We already find the antagonism of town and country; later the antagonism between those states which represent town interests and those which represent country interests, and inside the towns themselves the antagonism between industry and maritime commerce. The class relation between citizens and slaves is now completely developed.

² Marx's explanation, here, suggests a rather more predictable evolution of capitalism, yet it is in the nature of all dialectical theories of history that there may be unpredictable clashes of interest along the way. Crucially, the gradual divorce of the particular form of labour in which one is involved from the self is fostered by market capitalism; see section 3, 'The Method of Political Economy', in the *Grundrisse* (1857–58).

With the development of private property, we find here for the first time the same conditions which we shall find again, only on a more extensive scale, with modern private property. On the one hand, the concentration of private property, which began very early in Rome (as the Licinian agrarian law proves)³ and proceeded very rapidly from the time of the civil wars and especially under the Emperors; on the other hand, coupled with this, the transformation of the plebeian small peasantry into a proletariat, which, however, owing to its intermediate position between propertied citizens and slaves, never achieved an independent development.

The third form of ownership is feudal or estate property. If antiquity started out from the town and its little territory, the Middle Ages started out from the country. This differing starting-point was determined by the sparseness of the population at that time, which was scattered over a large area and which received no large increase from the conquerors. In contrast to Greece and Rome, feudal development at the outset, therefore, extends over a much wider territory, prepared by the Roman conquests and the spread of agriculture at first associated with it. The last centuries of the declining Roman Empire and its conquest by the barbarians destroyed a number of productive forces; agriculture had declined, industry had decayed for want of a market, trade had died out or been violently suspended, the rural and urban population had decreased. From these conditions and the mode of organization of the conquest determined by them, feudal property developed under the influence of the Germanic military constitution. Like tribal and communal ownership, it is based again on a community; but the directly producing class standing over against it is not, as in the case of the ancient community, the slaves, but the enserfed small peasantry. As soon as feudalism is fully developed, there also arises antagonism towards the towns. The hierarchical structure of landownership, and the armed bodies of retainers associated with it, gave the nobility power over the serfs. This feudal organization was, just as much as the ancient communal ownership, an association against a subjected producing class; but the form of association and the relation to the direct producers were different because of the different conditions of production.

This feudal system of landownership had its counterpart in the towns in the shape of corporative property, the feudal organization of trades. Here property consisted chiefly in the labour of each individual person. The necessity for association against the organized robber barons, the need for communal covered markets in an age when the industrialist was at the same time a merchant, the growing competition of the escaped serfs swarming into the rising towns, the feudal structure of the whole country: these combined to bring about the guilds. The gradually accumulated small capital of individual craftsmen and their stable numbers, as against the growing population, evolved the relation of journeyman and apprentice, which brought into being in the towns a hierarchy similar to that in the country.

Thus the chief form of property during the feudal epoch consisted on the one hand of landed property with serf labour chained to it, and on the other of the labour of the individual with small capital commanding the labour of journeymen. The organization of both was determined by the restricted conditions of production – the small-scale and

³ The Licinian Rogations (376–367 B.C.) aimed to lessen the gap between plebeians and patricians by admitting the former to some consular powers, even the office of consul itself, and also inaugurated a process of land-sharing and small-scale land owning.

primitive cultivation of the land and the craft type of industry. There was little division of labour in the heyday of feudalism. Each country bore in itself the antithesis of town and country; the division into estates was certainly strongly marked; but apart from the differentiation of princes, nobility, clergy, and peasants in the country, and masters, journeymen, apprentices, and soon also the rabble of casual labourers in the towns, no division of importance took place. In agriculture it was rendered difficult by the strip-system, beside which the cottage industry of the peasants themselves emerged. In industry there was no division of labour at all in the individual trades themselves, and very little between them. The separation of industry and commerce was found already in existence in older towns; in the newer it only developed later, when the towns entered into mutual relations.

The grouping of larger territories into feudal kingdoms was a necessity for the landed nobility as for the towns. The organization of the ruling class, the nobility, had, therefore, everywhere a monarch at its head.

The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production.⁴ The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are, i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of their will.

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.⁵

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to

⁴ Another swipe at the Young Hegelians, yet at the cost of relegating ideology to a mere set of reflexes and reactions. Note, also, the struggle in defining the empirical: is it just a synonym for the real, or a statistical, and thus factual, record? See below, p. 40.

⁵ The *camera obscura* image has often been portrayed as a rather mechanical figure, whereby a simple inversion of the Hegelian perspective would produce a more realistic sense of how society and history operate. Marx was to grant ideology rather more power in *A Critique of Political Economy* (1859): ideology is not simply a false consciousness, as it provides an inevitable forum and basis for a struggle of ideas, the end of which is to render the human subject as active and self-forming.

arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premisses. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness.

This method of approach is not devoid of premisses. It starts out from the real premisses and does not abandon them for a moment. Its premisses are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity,⁶ but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists.

Where speculation ends – in real life – there real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men. Empty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place. When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing-up of the most general results, abstractions which arise from the observation of the historical development of men. Viewed apart from real history, these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangement of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata. But they by no means afford a recipe or schema, as does philosophy, for neatly trimming the epochs of history. On the contrary, our difficulties begin only when we set about the observation and the arrangement – the real depiction – of our historical material, whether of a past epoch or of the present. The removal of these difficulties is governed by premisses which it is quite impossible to state here, but which only the study of the actual life-process and the activity of the individuals of each epoch will make evident. We shall select here some of these abstractions, which we use in contradistinction to the ideologists, and shall illustrate them by historical examples.

Since we are dealing with the Germans, who are devoid of premisses, we must begin by stating the first premiss of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premiss, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to ‘make history’. But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing, and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life. Even when the sensuous world

⁶ i.e. Man cannot exist in a sphere of ideas alone.

is reduced to a minimum, to a stick as with Saint Bruno,⁷ it presupposes the action of producing the stick. Therefore in any interpretation of history one has first of all to observe this fundamental fact in all its significance and all its implications and to accord it its due importance. It is well known that the Germans have never done this, and they have never, therefore, had an earthly basis for history and consequently never an historian. The French and the English, even if they have conceived the relation of this fact with so-called history only in an extremely one-sided fashion, particularly as long as they remained in the toils of political ideology, have nevertheless made the first attempts to give the writing of history a materialistic basis by being the first to write histories of civil society, of commerce and industry.

The second point is that the satisfaction of the first need (the action of satisfying, and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired) leads to new needs; and this production of new needs is the first historical act. Here we recognize immediately the spiritual ancestry of the great historical wisdom of the Germans who, when they run out of positive material and when they can serve up neither theological nor political nor literary rubbish, assert that this is not history at all, but the 'prehistoric era'. They do not, however, enlighten us as to how we proceed from this nonsensical 'prehistory' to history proper; although, on the other hand, in their historical speculation they seize upon this 'prehistory' with especial eagerness because they imagine themselves safe there from interference on the part of 'crude facts', and, at the same time, because there they can give full rein to their speculative impulse and set up and knock down hypotheses by the thousand.

The third circumstance which, from the very outset, enters into historical development, is that men, who daily remake their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the family.⁸ The family, which to begin with is the only social relationship, becomes later, when increased needs create new social relations and the increased population new needs, a subordinate one (except in Germany), and must then be treated and analysed according to the existing empirical data, not according to 'the concept of the family', as is the custom in Germany. These three aspects of social activity are not of course to be taken as three different stages, but just as three aspects or, to make it clear to the Germans,⁹ three 'moments', which have existed simultaneously since the dawn of history and the first men, and which still assert themselves in history today.

The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social, relationship. By social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter

⁷ The founder of the Carthusian order, dedicated to an austere and self-sacrificing life. St. Hugh of Grenoble helped him plus six others to found their first hermitage on the wooded slopes of Chartreuse. They later moved to Torre in Calabria.

⁸ Marx and Engels were at pains to differentiate the bourgeois concept of the family, which encouraged its members to be a series of functions (as wife or marriageable commodity or future wage-earner) from the most revered of relations that opposes capitalistic exploitation. See section II ('Proletarians and Communists') of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).

⁹ Marx and Engels both wanted to answer Stirner's view that, in fact, they were disciples of Feuerbach. In that they shared with him a reliance on a dialectical explanation of historical change, there are similarities, but this extract takes issue with the widespread idealism that was coming to typify German thought.

under what conditions, in what manner, and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a 'productive force'. Further, that the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society, hence, that the 'history of humanity' must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange. But it is also clear how in Germany it is impossible to write this sort of history, because the Germans lack not only the necessary power of comprehension and the material but also the 'evidence of their senses', for across the Rhine you cannot have any experience of these things since history has stopped happening. Thus it is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialistic connection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production, and which is as old as men themselves. This connection is ever taking on new forms, and thus presents a 'history' independently of the existence of any political or religious nonsense which in addition may hold men together.

Only now, after having considered four moments, four aspects of the primary historical relationships, do we find that man also possesses 'consciousness', but, even so, not inherent, not 'pure' consciousness. From the start the 'spirit' is afflicted with the curse of being 'burdened' with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into 'relations' with anything, it does not enter into any relation at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all. Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the immediate sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful, and unassailable force, with which men's relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus a purely animal consciousness of nature (natural religion) just because nature is as yet hardly modified historically. (We see here immediately that this natural religion or this particular relation of men to nature is determined by the form of society and vice versa. Here, as everywhere, the identity of nature and man appears in such a way that the restricted relation of men to nature determines their restricted relation to one another, and their restricted relation to one another determines men's restricted relation to nature.) On the other hand, man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him is the beginning of the consciousness that he is living in society at all. This beginning is as animal as social life itself at this stage. It is mere herd-consciousness, and at this point man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one. This sheep-like or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and, what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these there develops the division of labour, which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act, then that division of labour which develops spontaneously or 'naturally' by virtue of natural predisposition (e.g. physical strength), needs, accidents, etc. etc. Division

of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, priests, is concurrent.) From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. But even if this theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. comes into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production; this, moreover, can also occur in a particular national sphere of relations through the appearance of the contradiction, not within the national orbit, but between this national consciousness and the practice of other nations, i.e. between the national and the general consciousness of a nation (as we see it now in Germany).

Moreover, it is quite immaterial what consciousness starts to do on its own: out of all such muck we get only the one inference that these three moments, the forces of production, the state of society, and consciousness, can and must come into contradiction with one another, because the division of labour implies the possibility, nay the fact, that intellectual and material activity – enjoyment and labour, production and consumption – devolve on different individuals, and that the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in the negation in its turn of the division of labour. It is self-evident, moreover, that 'spectres', 'bonds', 'the higher being', 'concept', 'scruple', are merely the idealistic, spiritual expression, the conception apparently of the isolated individual, the image of very empirical fetters and limitations, within which the mode of production of life and the form of intercourse coupled with it move.

Ferdinand de Saussure

Introductory note

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) was a Swiss linguist who studied in Germany and France before taking up a university chair in his native city of Geneva, which he occupied for the rest of his life. Saussure is widely regarded as the father of modern linguistics. He is included in this *Reader* because his theory of language and how it should be studied played a seminal part in the development of ‘structuralism’ as a method in the human sciences, and thus significantly affected the course of literary studies in this century. The theory was never published by Saussure himself in a complete and authoritative form. The *Course in General Linguistics* (first published in Paris in 1915) which goes under his name was compiled by colleagues after his death, based on lecture notes taken down by Saussure’s students in his lifetime. Its most recent translator and editor, Roy Harris, has described it as ‘without doubt one of the most far-reaching works concerning the study of human cultural activities to have been published at any time since the Renaissance.’

Before Saussure, the study of language, or philology as it was usually called, had been essentially historical, tracing change and development in phonology and semantics within and between languages or groups of languages. Saussure argued that a scientific linguistics could never be based on such a ‘diachronic’ study but only by approaching language as a ‘synchronic’ *system*, i.e., a system of which all the elements and rules are in theory simultaneously available to the user of the language. Saussure’s discussion of ‘the object of study’ in linguistics, reprinted below, depends crucially on a distinction between *langage*, *langue* and *parole*, translated here as ‘language’ (i.e., the universal human phenomenon of language), ‘a language’ (i.e., a particular language system, for example English) and ‘speech’ (i.e., language in use, specific speech acts).

Language is made up of words, and another seminal contribution of Saussure’s was his analysis of the word as a verbal sign having two sides, an acoustic image or sound pattern and a concept. The former he called *signifiant*, translated by Harris as ‘signal’, and the other *signifié*, translated as ‘significance’. (The more usual translations are ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’.) Saussure’s crucial point was that the connection between the two is arbitrary – that is to say, a convention accepted by all users of a given language, not the result of some existential link between word and thing. It is the arbitrariness of the verbal sign that necessitates a systematic structure for language.

Some implications for literary studies which may be glimpsed in the brief extract from the *Course* reprinted below (from Roy Harris's translation of 1983), are: (1) the idea that literary texts could be seen as manifestations of a literary system (such as narrative) the underlying rules of which might be understood, thus making literary criticism a more 'scientific' discipline; (2) scepticism about historical explanations of literary phenomena, especially research into the 'origins' of meaning; (3) a corresponding emphasis on the collective or social construction of meaning in the production and reception of literary texts; (4) a critique of naïve theories of literary 'realism'. Many of the essays included in this book are directly or indirectly indebted to Saussure's theory of language.

Cross-references

- 8 Jakobson
- 9 Brecht
- 10 Lacan
- 11 Derrida
- 12 Todorov
- 13 Bakhtin
- 17 Barthes
- 19 Kristeva
- 28 Eco
- 29 Riffaterre

Commentary

- Jonathan Culler, *Saussure* (1976)
- Roy Harris, *Reading Saussure* (1987)
- Paul J. Thibault, *Re-reading Saussure: the dynamics of signs in social life* (1996)
- Roy Harris, *Saussure and his Interpreters* (2001)

The object of study

1. ON DEFINING A LANGUAGE

What is it that linguistics sets out to analyse? What is that actual object of study in its entirety? The question is a particularly difficult one. We shall see why later. First, let us simply try to grasp the nature of the difficulty.

Other sciences are provided with objects of study given in advance, which are then examined from different points of view. Nothing like that is the case in linguistics. Suppose someone pronounces the French word *nu* ('naked'). At first sight, one might think this would be an example of an independently given linguistic object. But more careful consideration reveals a series of three or four quite different things, depending on the viewpoint adopted. There is a sound, there is the expression of an idea, there is a derivative of Latin *nūdum*, and so on. The object is not given in advance of the viewpoint: far from it. Rather, one might say that it is the viewpoint adopted which creates the object. Furthermore, there is nothing to tell us in advance whether one of these ways of looking at it is prior to or superior to any of the others.

Whichever viewpoint is adopted, moreover, linguistic phenomena always present two complementary facets, each depending on the other. For example:

(1) The ear perceives articulated syllables as auditory impressions. But the sounds in question would not exist without the vocal organs. There would be no *n*, for instance, without these two complementary aspects to it. So one cannot equate the language simply with what the ear hears. One cannot divorce what is heard from oral articulation. Nor, on the other hand, can one specify the relevant movements of the vocal organs without reference to the corresponding auditory impression.

(2) But even if we ignored this phonetic duality, would language then be reducible to phonetic facts? No. Speech sounds are only the instrument of thought, and have no independent existence. Here another complementarity emerges, and one of great importance. A sound, itself a complex auditory-articulatory unit, in turn combines with an idea to form another complex unit, both physiologically and psychologically. Nor is this all.

(3) Language has an individual aspect and a social aspect. One is not conceivable without the other. Furthermore:

(4) Language at any given time involves an established system and an evolution. At any given time, it is an institution in the present and a product of the past. At first sight, it looks very easy to distinguish between the system and its history, between what it is and what it was. In reality, the connexion between the two is so close that it is hard to separate them. Would matters be simplified if one considered the ontogenesis of linguistic phenomena, beginning with a study of children's language, for example? No. It is quite illusory to believe that where language is concerned the problem of origins is any different from the problem of permanent conditions. There is no way out of the circle.

So however we approach the question, no one object of linguistic study emerges of its own accord. Whichever way we turn, the same dilemma confronts us. Either we tackle each problem on one front only, and risk failing to take into account the dualities mentioned above: or else we seem committed to trying to study language in several ways simultaneously, in which case the object of study becomes a muddle of disparate, unconnected things. By proceeding thus one opens the door to various sciences – psychology, anthropology, prescriptive grammar, philology, and so on – which are to be distinguished from linguistics. These sciences could lay claim to language as falling in their domain: but their methods are not the ones that are needed.

One solution only, in our view, resolves all these difficulties. *The linguist must take the study of linguistic structure as his primary concern, and relate all other manifestations of language to it.* Indeed, amid so many dualities, linguistic structure seems to be the one thing that is independently definable and provides something our minds can satisfactorily grasp.

What, then, is linguistic structure? It is not, in our opinion, simply the same thing as language. Linguistic structure is only one part of language, even though it is an essential part. The structure of a language is a social product of our language faculty. At the same time, it is also a body of necessary conventions adopted by society to enable members of society to use their language faculty. Language in its entirety has many different and disparate aspects. It lies astride the boundaries separating various domains. It is at the same time physical, physiological and psychological. It belongs both to the individual and to society. No classification of human phenomena provides any single place for it, because language as such has no discernible unity.

A language as a structured system, on the contrary, is both a self-contained whole and a principle of classification. As soon as we give linguistic structure pride of place among the facts of language, we introduce a natural order into an aggregate which lends itself to no other classification.

It might be objected to this principle of classification that our use of language depends on a faculty endowed by nature: whereas language systems are acquired and conventional, and so ought to be subordinated to – instead of being given priority over – our natural ability.

To this objection one might reply as follows.

First, it has not been established that the function of language, as manifested in speech, is entirely natural: that is to say, it is not clear that our vocal apparatus is made for speaking as our legs for walking. Linguists are by no means in agreement on this issue. Whitney, for instance, who regards languages as social institutions on exactly the same footing as all other social institutions, holds it to be a matter of chance or mere convenience that it is our vocal apparatus we use for linguistic purposes. Man, in his view, might well have chosen to use gestures, thus substituting visual images for sound patterns. Whitney's is doubtless too extreme a position. For languages are not in all respects similar to other social institutions. Moreover, Whitney goes too far when he says that the selection of the vocal apparatus for language was accidental. For it was in some measure imposed upon us by Nature. But the American linguist is right about the essential point: the language we use is a convention, and it makes no difference what exactly the nature of the agreed sign is. The question of the vocal apparatus is thus a secondary one as far as the problem of language is concerned.

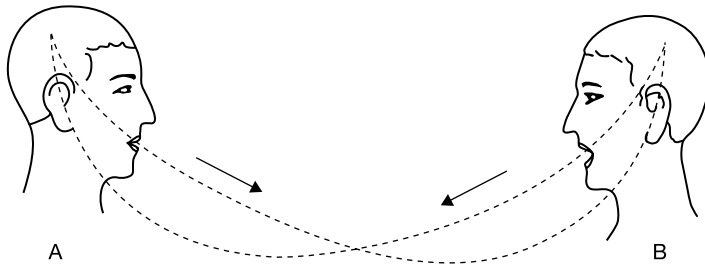
This idea gains support from the notion of *language articulation*. In Latin, the word *articulus* means 'member, part, subdivision in a sequence of things'. As regards language, articulation may refer to the division of the chain of speech into syllables, or to the division of the chain of meanings into meaningful units. It is in this sense that one speaks in German of *gegliederte Sprache* [articulate speech]. On the basis of this second interpretation, one may say that it is not spoken language which is natural to man, but the faculty of constructing a language, i.e. a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas.

Broca discovered that the faculty of speech is localised in the third frontal convolution of the left hemisphere of the brain. This fact has been seized upon to justify regarding language as a natural endowment. But the same localisation is known to hold for *everything* connected with language, including writing. Thus what seems to be indicated, when we take into consideration also the evidence from various forms of aphasia due to lesions in the centres of localisation is: (1) that the various disorders which affect spoken language are interconnected in many ways with disorders affecting written language, and (2) that in all cases of aphasia or agraphia what is affected is not so much the ability to utter or inscribe this or that, but the ability to produce in any given mode signs corresponding to normal language. All this leads us to believe that, over and above the functioning of the various organs, there exists a more general faculty governing signs, which may be regarded as the linguistic faculty *par excellence*. So by a different route we are once again led to the same conclusion.

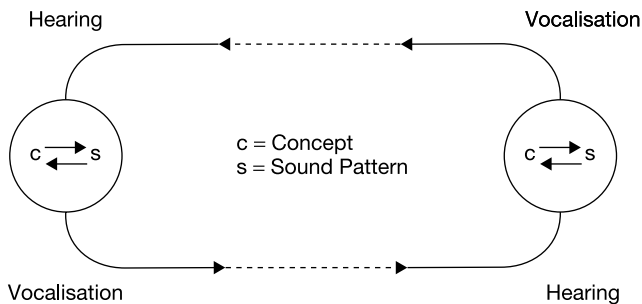
Finally, in support of giving linguistic structure pride of place in our study of language, there is this argument: that, whether natural or not, the faculty of articulating words is put to use only by means of the linguistic instrument created and provided by society. Therefore it is no absurdity to say that it is linguistic structure which gives language what unity it has.

2. LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE: ITS PLACE AMONG THE FACTS OF LANGUAGE

In order to identify what role linguistic structure plays within the totality of language, we must consider the individual act of speech and trace what takes place in the speech circuit. This act requires at least two individuals: without this minimum the circuit would not be complete. Suppose, then, we have two people, *A* and *B*, talking to each other:



The starting point of the circuit is in the brain of one individual, for instance *A*, where facts of consciousness which we shall call concepts are associated with representations of linguistic signs or sound patterns by means of which they may be expressed. Let us suppose that a given concept triggers in the brain a corresponding sound pattern. This is an entirely *psychological* phenomenon, followed in turn by a *physiological* process: the brain transmits to the organs of phonation an impulse corresponding to the pattern. Then sound waves are sent from *A*'s mouth to *B*'s ear: a purely *physical* process. Next, the circuit continues in *B* in the opposite order: from ear to brain, the physiological transmission of the sound pattern; in the brain, the psychological association of this pattern with the corresponding concept. If *B* speaks in turn, this new act will pursue – from his brain to *A*'s – exactly the same course as the first, passing through the same successive phases, which we may represent as follows:



This analysis makes no claim to be complete. One could go on to distinguish the auditory sensation itself, the identification of that sensation with the latent sound pattern, the patterns of muscular movement associated with phonation, and so on. We have included only those elements considered essential; but our schematisation enables us straight away to separate the parts which are physical (sound waves) from those which are physiological (phonation and hearing) and those which are psychological (the sound patterns of words and the concepts). It is particularly important to note that the sound patterns of the

words are not to be confused with actual sounds. The word patterns are psychological, just as the concepts associated with them are.

The circuit as here represented may be further divided:

- (a) into an external part (sound vibrations passing from mouth to ear) and an internal part (comprising all the rest);
- (b) into a psychological and a non-psychological part, the latter comprising both the physiological facts localised in the organs and the physical facts external to the individual; and
- (c) into an active part and a passive part, the former comprising everything which goes from the association centre of one individual to the ear of the other, and the latter comprising everything which goes from an individual's ear to his own association centre.

Finally, in the psychological part localised in the brain, one may call everything which is active 'executive' ($c \rightarrow s$), and everything which is passive 'receptive' ($s \rightarrow c$).

In addition, one must allow for a faculty of association and co-ordination which comes into operation as soon as one goes beyond individual signs in isolation. It is this faculty which plays the major role in the organisation of the language as a system.

But in order to understand this role, one must leave the individual act, which is merely language in embryo, and proceed to consider the social phenomenon.

All the individuals linguistically linked in this manner will establish among themselves a kind of mean; all of them will reproduce – doubtless not exactly, but approximately – the same signs linked to the same concepts.

What is the origin of this social crystallisation? Which of the parts of the circuit is involved? For it is very probable that not all of them are equally relevant.

The physical part of the circuit can be dismissed from consideration straight away. When we hear a language we do not know being spoken, we hear the sounds but we cannot enter into the social reality of what is happening, because of our failure to comprehend.

The psychological part of the circuit is not involved in its entirety either. The executive side of it plays no part, for execution is never carried out by the collectivity: it is always individual, and the individual is always master of it. This is what we shall designate by the term *speech*.

The individual's receptive and co-ordinating faculties build up a stock of imprints which turn out to be for all practical purposes the same as the next person's. How must we envisage this social product, so that the language itself can be seen to be clearly distinct from the rest? If we could collect the totality of word patterns stored in all those individuals, we should have the social bond which constitutes their language. It is a fund accumulated by the members of the community through the practice of speech, a grammatical system existing potentially in every brain, or more exactly in the brains of a group of individuals; for the language is never complete in any single individual, but exists perfectly only in the collectivity.

By distinguishing between the language itself and speech, we distinguish at the same time: (1) what is social from what is individual, and (2) what is essential from what is ancillary and more or less accidental.

The language itself is not a function of the speaker. It is the product passively registered by the individual. It never requires premeditation, and reflexion enters into it only for the activity of classifying to be discussed below.

Speech, on the contrary, is an individual act of the will and the intelligence, in which one must distinguish: (1) the combinations through which the speaker uses the code provided by the language in order to express his own thought, and (2) the psychophysical mechanism which enables him to externalise these combinations.

It should be noted that we have defined things, not words. Consequently the distinctions established are not affected by the fact that certain ambiguous terms have no exact equivalents in other languages. Thus in German the word *Sprache* covers individual languages as well as language in general, while *Rede* answers more or less to 'speech', but also has the special sense of 'discourse'. In Latin the word *sermo* covers language in general and also speech, while *lingua* is the word for 'a language'; and so on. No word corresponds precisely to any one of the notions we have tried to specify above. That is why all definitions based on words are vain. It is an error of method to proceed from words in order to give definitions of things.

To summarise, then, a language as a structured system may be characterised as follows:

(1) Amid the disparate mass of facts involved in language, it stands out as a well defined entity. It can be localised in that particular section of the speech circuit where sound patterns are associated with concepts. It is the social part of language, external to the individual, who by himself is powerless either to create it or to modify it. It exists only in virtue of a kind of contract agreed between the members of a community. On the other hand, the individual needs an apprenticeship in order to acquaint himself with its workings: as a child, he assimilates it only gradually. It is quite separate from speech: a man who loses the ability to speak none the less retains his grasp of the language system, provided he understands the vocal signs he hears.

(2) A language system, as distinct from speech, is an object that may be studied independently. Dead languages are no longer spoken, but we can perfectly well acquaint ourselves with their linguistic structure. A science which studies linguistic structure is not only able to dispense with other elements of language, but is possible only if those other elements are kept separate.

(3) While language in general is heterogeneous, a language system is homogeneous in nature. It is a system of signs in which the one essential is the union of sense and sound pattern, both parts of the sign being psychological.

(4) Linguistic structure is no less real than speech, and no less amenable to study. Linguistic signs, although essentially psychological, are not abstractions. The associations, ratified by collective agreement, which go to make up the language are realities localised in the brain. Moreover, linguistic signs are, so to speak, tangible: writing can fix them in conventional images, whereas it would be impossible to photograph acts of speech in all their details. The utterance of a word, however small, involves an infinite number of muscular movements extremely difficult to examine and to represent. In linguistic structure, on the contrary, there is only the sound pattern, and this can be represented by one constant visual image. For if one leaves out of account that multitude of movements required to actualise it in speech, each sound pattern, as we shall see, is only the sum of a limited number of elements or speech sounds, and these can in turn be represented by a corresponding number of symbols in writing. Our ability to identify elements of linguistic structure in this way is what makes it possible for dictionaries and grammars to give us a faithful representation of a language. A language is a repository of sound patterns and writing is their tangible form.

3. LANGUAGES AND THEIR PLACE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS. SEMIOLOGY

The above characteristics lead us to realise another, which is more important. A language, defined in this way from among the totality of facts of language, has a particular place in the realm of human affairs, whereas language does not.

A language, as we have just seen, is a social institution. But it is in various respects distinct from political, juridical and other institutions. Its special nature emerges when we bring into consideration a different order of facts.

A language is a system of signs expressing ideas, and hence comparable to writing, the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, symbolic rites, forms of politeness, military signals, and so on. It is simply the most important of such systems.

It is therefore possible to conceive of a science *which studies the role of signs as part of social life*. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it *semiology*ⁱ (from the Greek *sēmeion*, 'sign'). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge.

It is for the psychologist to determine the exact place of semiology.ⁱⁱ The linguist's task is to define what makes languages a special type of system within the totality of semiological facts. The question will be taken up later on: here we shall make just one point, which is that if we have now for the first time succeeded in assigning linguistics its place among the sciences, that is because we have grouped it with semiology.

Why is it that semiology is not yet recognised as an autonomous science with its own object of study, like other sciences? The fact is that here we go round in a circle. On the one hand, nothing is more appropriate than the study of languages to bring out the nature of the semiological problem. But to formulate the problem suitably, it would be necessary to study what a language is in itself: whereas hitherto a language has usually been considered as a function of something else, from other points of view.

In the first place, there is the superficial view taken by the general public, which sees a language merely as a nomenclature. This is a view which stifles any inquiry into the true nature of linguistic structure.

Then there is the viewpoint of the psychologist, who studies the mechanism of the sign in the individual. This is the most straightforward approach, but it takes us no further than individual execution. It does not even take us as far as the linguistic sign itself, which is social by nature.

Even when due recognition is given to the fact that the sign must be studied as a social phenomenon, attention is restricted to those features of languages which they share with institutions mainly established by voluntary decision. In this way, the investigation is diverted from its goal. It neglects those characteristics which belong only to semiological systems in general, and to languages in particular. For the sign always to some extent eludes control by the will, whether of the individual or of society: that is its essential nature, even though it may be by no means obvious at first sight.

So this characteristic emerges clearly only in languages, but its manifestations appear in features to which least attention is paid. All of which contributes to a failure to appreciate either the necessity or the particular utility of a science of semiology. As far as we are

concerned, on the other hand, the linguistic problem is first and foremost semiological. All our proposals derive their rationale from this basic fact. If one wishes to discover the true nature of language systems, one must first consider what they have in common with all other systems of the same kind. Linguistic factors which at first seem central (for example, the workings of the vocal apparatus) must be relegated to a place of secondary importance if it is found that they merely differentiate languages from other such systems. In this way, light will be thrown not only upon the linguistic problem. By considering rites, customs, etc., as signs, it will be possible, we believe, to see them in a new perspective. The need will be felt to consider them as semiological phenomena and to explain them in terms of the laws of semiology.

Notes

ⁱ Not to be confused with *semantics*, which studies changes of meaning. Saussure gave no detailed exposition of semantics. (Editorial note)

ⁱⁱ Cf. A. Naville, *Classification des sciences*, 2nd ed., p. 104. (Editorial note)

Sigmund Freud

Introductory note

The achievement of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) would appear to be so well-known that no significant modern intellectual history could omit his radical approaches to interpreting the dream-state and the prominence he gave to unconscious drives in general. This is now not often taken to be scandalous, yet the proposition that our psychic responses so often elude rational control and that civilized behaviour might just be a veneer has re-cast the terms of many debates about social progress and individual personality. For some, the inability to come to objective judgement as to the results of psychoanalysis has signalled an inherent weakness in its methods.

Born in Moravia (now a part of the Czech Republic), Freud moved with his family to Vienna in 1860. After taking a medical degree in 1881, he started a career as a clinical neurologist, but immediately took a few months out to spend a short period on a travelling bursary working alongside Jean Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. Charcot's interests were in hysteria and hypnotism, and his work at the hospital brought in a number of high-profile patients who suffered from a variety of nervous disorders. The very vagueness of the available diagnostic vocabulary with which to investigate these illnesses points to the lack of serious respect paid at that time to studies of the mind (Charcot himself saw his work as a branch of neuropathology and thus eventually capable of physiological solution).

On his return to Vienna in 1886, Freud set up in private practice as a consultant in nervous disorders and the serious analysis of the causes of neurosis began in earnest. Together with Josef Breuer, they studied the effects of hysteria. Their *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) was to introduce the case of 'Anna O' to the world and Breuer's own term for his treatment of her, the 'talking cure'. Alongside this formative investigation, Freud was noting down the details of dreams recounted by patients and colleagues. In 1900, his *Interpretation of Dreams* commenced a project that led to a radical assessment of the role of desire within civilized culture. In short order, in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), Freud treated the dream-state as one of the major gateways to unconscious forces. Alongside slips of the tongue, jokes and memory lapses, dreams were a working out of repressed materials that emerged as fantasy in dream narratives, and yet were significant symptoms of deeply formative drives that the conscious mind could neither recognize nor grasp. In a dream

there were usually four elements: condensation (*Verdichtung*), displacement (*Verschiebung*), considerations of representability (*Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*) and secondary revision (*sekundäre Bearbeitung*). Dreams can often involve a series of overlapping concerns, an 'overdetermination' of elements, where complex neuroses are suggested by a detail, that only emerges as central in analysis, or apparently unrelated details, that lead from (and to) quite separate anxieties. This process of errant fantasy is often a condensation of unconscious drives and is the stock-in-trade of jokes or puns. The literal sound, or primary meanings, of words sometimes clashes with a normal meaning, as with puns. Dreams display material that is often a form of disguise or euphemism, the safest way to express 'latent' content; in this way, the apparent innocence of the dream means that it is fertile ground for such 'displacements', where the manifest dream events can only convey, in analysis, the latent and repressed matter in disguise. It is not only the case that certain anxieties cannot be portrayed on account of their potentially disturbing qualities but also because they would not naturally suggest physical form, such as fear of a partner's adultery or sexuality. They become representable through symbols, such as phallic towers or comforting caverns. Lastly, when a dream is retold, there is a further censorship, or 'secondary revision', where the urge for the narrative to 'make sense' might actually lead the dreamer to rearrange details or pre-emptively interpret them.

Freudians take the cue from these analyses to approach the literary work as analogous to a dream, and the author's disturbance as a patient's neurosis. It would seem that the most well-attuned person would not be an author. Freud only occasionally makes this connection. In his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916–17), he found that the artist was 'in rudiments an introvert, not far from neurosis. He is oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs. He desires to win honour, power, love, wealth, fame and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these satisfactions' (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* [24 vols., 1953], XVI:376). Art is thus a compensation, where 'ungratified wishes' are put into a frame and so resolved – but only in the imagination – both for the writer and his audience. In his essay, 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming' (1908), Freud shies away from trying to explain how artists achieve their art; the nearest he gets is to claim that play is essential and the disordering of temporal order part of the pleasure one gets akin to secondary revision.

The *Introductory Lectures* were given over two successive University winter terms in Vienna (October to March, 1915–16 and then 1916–17) and they form part of an attempt on his part to take stock of how his discoveries might form a method. These excerpts explain what he had learnt in them, and also how he set about unravelling the process of associative connections that led to possible resolutions of anxiety. Lecture 6 follows several on slips of the tongue or 'parapraxes' and a first lecture on dreams entitled, 'Difficulties and First Approaches'. The case-studies on pp. 64–69 might be applied to literature and are fruitful in illustrating the distinction between Manifest and Latent elements of the dream-state.

Cross-references

10 Lacan

19 Kristeva

20 Cixous
 47 Rose
 39 Bowie
 42 Žižek

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Lecture 6

The premisses and technique of interpretation

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, – What we need, then, is a new path, a method which will enable us to make a start in the investigation of dreams. I will put a suggestion to you which presents itself. Let us take it as a premiss from this point onwards that *dreams are not somatic¹ but psychical phenomena*. You know what that means, but what justifies our making the assumption? Nothing: but there is nothing either to prevent our making it. Here is the position: if dreams are somatic phenomena they are no concern of ours, they can only interest us on the assumption that they are mental phenomena. We will therefore work on the assumption that they really are, to see what comes of it. The outcome of our work will decide whether we are to hold to this assumption and whether we may then go on to treat it in turn as a proved finding. But what is it actually that we want to arrive at? What is our work aiming at? We want something that is sought for in all scientific work – to understand the phenomena, to establish a correlation between them and, in the latter end, if it is possible, to enlarge our power over them.

We proceed with our work, accordingly, on the supposition that dreams are psychical phenomena. In that case they are products and utterances of the dreamer's, but utterances which tell us nothing, which we do not understand. Well, what do you do if I make an unintelligible utterance to you? You question me, is that not so? Why should we not do the same thing to the dreamer – *question him as to what his dream means?*

As you will remember, we found ourselves in this situation once before.² It was while we were investigating certain parapraxes – a case of a slip of the tongue. Someone had said [p. 68]: 'Then facts came to *Vorschwein*' and we thereupon asked him – no, it was luckily

¹ Physical, i.e. Freud considers his patients afflicted by no physiological disorder.

² In lecture 3, the second of his lectures on 'Parapraxes' or, slips of the tongue (given 1915; pub. 1916).

not we but some other people who had no connection at all with psychoanalysis – these other people, then, asked him what he meant by this unintelligible remark. And he replied at once that he had intended to say ‘these facts were *Schweinereien* [disgusting]’, but had forced this intention back in favour of the milder version ‘then facts came to *Vorschein* [light]’. I pointed out to you at the time³ that this piece of information was the model for every psychoanalytic investigation, and you will understand now that psychoanalysis follows the technique of getting the people under examination so far as possible themselves to produce the solution of their riddles.⁴ Thus, too, it is the dreamer himself who should tell us what his dream means.

But, as we know, things are not so simple with dreams. With parapraxes it worked all right in a number of cases; but then others came along in which the person who was questioned would say nothing, and even indignantly rejected the answer we proposed to him. With dreams cases of the first sort are entirely lacking; the dreamer always says he knows nothing. He cannot reject our interpretation as we have none to offer him. Are we to give up our attempt then? Since he knows nothing and we know nothing and a third person could know even less, there seems to be no prospect of finding out. If you feel inclined, then, give up the attempt! But if you feel otherwise, you can accompany me further. For I can assure you that it is quite possible, and highly probable indeed, that the dreamer *does* know what his dream means: *only he does not know that he knows it and for that reason thinks he does not know it*.

You will point out to me that I am once more introducing an assumption, the second already in this short argument, and that in doing so I am enormously reducing my procedure’s claim to credibility: ‘Subject to the premiss that dreams are psychical phenomena, and subject to the further premiss that there are mental things in a man which he knows without knowing that he knows them . . .’ and so on. If so, one has only to consider the internal improbability of each of these two premisses, and one can quietly divert one’s interest from any conclusions that may be based on them.

I have not brought you here, Ladies and Gentlemen, to delude you or to conceal things from you. In my prospectus, it is true, I announced a course of ‘Elementary Lectures to Serve as an Introduction to Psychoanalysis’, but what I had in mind was nothing in the nature of a presentation *in usum Delphini*, which would give you a smooth account with all the difficulties carefully concealed, with the gaps filled in and the doubts glossed over, so that you might believe with an easy mind that you had learnt something new. No, for the very reason of your being beginners, I wanted to show you our science as it is, with its unevennesses and roughnesses, its demands and hesitations. For I know that it is the same in all sciences and cannot possibly be otherwise, especially in their beginnings. I know also that ordinarily instruction is at pains to start out by concealing such difficulties and incompletenesses from the learner. But that will not do for psychoanalysis. So I have in

³ In the above lecture: ‘He was naturally anxious . . . to fulfil the request to explain the slip, so he said the first thing that came into his head which seemed capable of providing such an explanation. But there is no proof that the slip did in fact take place in that way. It may have been so, but it may just as well have happened otherwise’.

⁴ Freud proceeds in this lecture to exemplify the power of denial – and the vagrancy of the unconscious: ‘You nourish the illusion of there being such a thing as psychical freedom, and you will not give it up. I am sorry to say I disagree with you categorically over this’.

fact laid down two premisses, one within the other; and if anyone finds the whole thing too laborious and too insecure, or if anyone is accustomed to higher certainties and more elegant deductions, he need go no further with us. I think, however, that he should leave psychological problems entirely alone, for it is to be feared that in this quarter he will find impassable the precise and secure paths which he is prepared to follow. And, for a science which has something to offer, there is no necessity to sue for a hearing and for followers. Its findings are bound to canvass on its behalf and it can wait until these have compelled attention to it.

But for those who would like to persist in the subject, I can point out that my two assumptions are not on a par. The first, that dreams are psychical phenomena, is the premiss which we seek to prove by the outcome of our work; the second one has already been proved in another field, and I am merely venturing to bring it over from there to our own problems.

Where, then, in what field, can it be that proof has been found that there is knowledge of which the person concerned nevertheless knows nothing, as we are proposing to assume of dreamers? After all, this would be a strange, surprising fact and one which would alter our view of mental life and which would have no need to hide itself: a fact, incidentally, which cancels itself in its very naming and which nevertheless claims to be something real – a contradiction in terms. Well, it does not hide itself. It is not its fault if people know nothing about it or do not pay enough attention to it. Any more than we are to blame because judgement is passed on all these psychological problems by people who have kept at a distance from all the observations and experiences which are decisive on the matter.

The proof was found in the field of hypnotic phenomena. When, in 1889, I took part in the extraordinarily impressive demonstrations by Liébeault and Bernheim at Nancy,⁵ I witnessed the following experiment among others. If a man was put into a state of somnambulism, was made to experience all kinds of things in a hallucinatory manner, and was then woken up, he appeared at first to know nothing of what had happened during his hypnotic sleep. Bernheim then asked him straight out to report what had happened to him under hypnosis. The man maintained that he could remember nothing. But Bernheim held out against this, brought urgent pressure to bear on him, insisted that he knew it and must remember it. And, lo and behold! the man grew uncertain, began to reflect, and recalled in a shadowy way one of the experiences that had been suggested to him, and then another piece, and the memory became clearer and clearer and more and more complete, and finally came to light without a break. Since, however, he knew afterwards what had happened and had learnt nothing about it from anyone else in the interval, we are justified in concluding that he had known it earlier as well. It was merely inaccessible to him; he did not know that he knew it and thought he did not know it. That is to say, the position was exactly the same as what we suspected in our dreamer.

⁵ Ambroise Auguste Liébeault and Hippolyte Bernheim carried out these experiments on their own patients to explore the inaccessibility of certain regions of the mind. In Freud's phrase, this was a 'special region of the mind, shut off from all the rest' (Lecture 18, 'Fixation to Traumas – the unconscious' [1916–17] in the series, 'General Theory of the Neuroses'). One of Bernheim's subjects was told to open an umbrella in the hospital ward five minutes after he had awoken, and, on completing the task, 'he could produce no motive for his action'. See Bernheim's *Hypnotisme, Suggestion et Psychothérapie: études nouvelles* and his *Thérapeutique suggestive* (both 1891).

I hope you will be surprised that this fact has been established and will ask me: 'Why did you omit to bring this proof forward earlier, in connection with the parapraxes, when we came to the point of attributing to a man who had made a slip of the tongue an intention to say things of which he knew nothing and which he denied? If a person thinks he knows nothing of experiences the memory of which he nevertheless has within him, it is no longer so improbable that he knows nothing of other mental processes within him. This argument would certainly have impressed us, and helped us to understand parapraxes.' Of course I could have brought it forward then, but I reserved it for another place, where it was more needed. The parapraxes explained themselves in part, and in part left us with a suggestion that, in order to preserve the continuity of the phenomena concerned, it would be wise to assume the existence of mental processes of which the subject knows nothing. In the case of dreams we are compelled to bring in explanations from elsewhere and moreover I expect that in their case you will find it easier to accept my carrying over of the explanations from hypnosis. The state in which a parapraxis occurs is bound to strike you as being the normal one; it has no similarity with the hypnotic state. On the other hand there is an obvious kinship between the hypnotic state and the state of sleep, which is a necessary condition of dreaming. Hypnosis, indeed, is described as an artificial sleep. We tell the person we are hypnotizing to sleep, and the suggestions we make are comparable to the dreams of natural sleep. The psychical situations in the two cases are really analogous. In natural sleep we withdraw our interest from the whole external world; and in hypnotic sleep we also withdraw it from the whole world, but with the single exception of the person who has hypnotized us and with whom we remain in rapport. Incidentally, the sleep of a nursing mother, who remains in rapport with her child and can be woken only by him, is a normal counterpart of hypnotic sleep. So it scarcely seems a very bold venture to transpose a situation from hypnosis to natural sleep. The assumption that in a dreamer too a knowledge about his dreams is present, though it is inaccessible to him so that he himself does not believe it, is not something entirely out of the blue. It should be noticed, moreover, that a third line of approach to the study of dreams is opened at this point: from the stimuli which disturb sleep, from day-dreams, and now in addition from the suggested dreams of the hypnotic state.

We may now go back to our task with increased confidence perhaps. It is very probable, then, that the dreamer knows about his dream; the only question is how to make it possible for him to discover this knowledge and communicate it to us. We do not require him to tell us straight away the sense of his dream, but he will be able to find its origin, the circle of thoughts and interests from which it sprang. You will recall that in the case of the parapraxis the man was asked how he had arrived at the wrong word '*Vorschwein*' and the first thing that occurred to him⁶ gave us the explanation. Our technique with dreams, then, is a very simple one, copied from this example. We shall once more ask the dreamer how he arrived at the dream, and once more his first remark is to be looked on as an explanation. Thus we disregard the distinction between his thinking or not thinking that he knows something, and we treat both cases as one and the same.

⁶ The translator, James Strachey, here points out that the German word, 'Einfall', is here nearest to 'this that occurred to him', the emphasis being on the sense of a sudden notion that may or may not be linked to the meaning consciously intended.

This technique is certainly very simple, but I fear it will rouse your liveliest opposition. You will say: 'A fresh assumption! The third! And the most unlikely of all! If I ask the dreamer what occurs to him in connection with the dream, is precisely the first thing that occurs to him going to bring the explanation we are hoping for? But nothing at all may occur to him, or heaven knows what may occur to him. I cannot see what an expectation of that kind is based on. That is really showing too much trust in Providence at a point where rather more exercise of the critical faculty would be appropriate. Besides, a dream is not a single wrong word; it consists of a number of elements. So which association are we to take up?'

You are correct on all your minor points. A dream differs from a slip of the tongue, among other things, in the multiplicity of its elements. Our technique must take this into account. I therefore suggest to you that we should divide the dream into its elements and start a separate inquiry into each element; if we do this, the analogy with a slip of the tongue is re-established. You are also right in thinking that when the dreamer is questioned about the separate elements of the dream he may reply that nothing occurs to him. There are some instances in which we let this reply pass, and you will later hear which these are;⁷ strangely enough, they are instances in which definite ideas may occur to us ourselves. But in general if the dreamer asserts that nothing occurs to him we contradict him; we bring urgent pressure to bear on him, we insist that something must occur to him – and we turn out to be right. He will produce an idea – some idea, it is a matter of indifference to us which. He will give us certain pieces of information, which may be described as 'historical', with particular ease. He may say: 'That's something that happened yesterday' (as was the case in our two 'matter-of-fact' dreams),⁸ or: 'That reminds me of something that happened a short time ago' – and we shall discover in this way that dreams are connected with impressions of the last day or two much more often than we thought to begin with.⁹ And finally he will also recall, starting from the dream, events from further back and even perhaps from the far distant past.

But on your main point you are wrong. If you think it is arbitrary to assume that the first thing that occurs to the dreamer is bound to bring what we are looking for or to lead us to it, if you think that what occurs to him might be anything in the world and might have no connection with what we are looking for, and that it is only exhibiting my trust in Providence if I expect something different – then you are making a great mistake. Once before¹⁰ I ventured to tell you that you nourish a deeply rooted faith in undetermined

⁷ In Lecture 10, 'The Symbolism of Dreams', Freud is concerned at the stages where, with some patients, there was a blocking of free association by some unconscious disturbance in the process. In Lecture 27, 'Transference', he claims that at these points (and only at these points) the psychologist was allowed to delve deeply with leading questions to activate the dialogue.

⁸ Cf. Lecture 5, 'Difficulties and First Approaches', where Freud notes the occurrence of 'sensible, matter-of-fact and reasonable' dreams that could be accounted for by deriving them from 'repetitions from daily life'. The question is then, why are these slices of directly-apprehended (or remembered) life memorable?

⁹ Continuing from the above reflection, he opens out a further forum of debate: 'We not only want to know what a dream says, but if it speaks clearly, as it does in these examples of ours; we also want to know why and for what purpose this familiar material, only recently experienced, has been repeated in the dream'.

¹⁰ i.e. in the second lecture on 'Parapraxes'. See note 2 above.

psychical events and in free will, but that this is quite unscientific and must yield to the demand of a determinism whose rule extends over mental life. I beg you to respect it as a fact that *that* is what occurred to the man when he was questioned and nothing else. But I am not opposing one faith with another. It can be proved that the idea produced by the man was not arbitrary nor indeterminable nor unconnected with what we were looking for. Indeed, not long ago I learnt – without, I may say, attaching too much importance to the fact – that experimental psychology too had brought up evidence to that effect.

In view of the importance of the matter, I will ask for your special attention. If I ask someone to tell me what occurs to him in response to a particular element of a dream, I am asking him to surrender himself to free association *while keeping an idea in mind as a starting-point*. This calls for a special attitude of the attention which is quite different from reflection and which excludes reflection. Some people achieve this attitude with ease; others show an incredibly high degree of clumsiness when they attempt it. There is, however, a higher degree of freedom of association: that is to say, I may drop the insistence on keeping an initial idea in mind and only lay down the sort or kind of association I want – I may, for instance, require the experimenter to allow a proper name or a number to occur to him freely. What then occurs to him would presumably be even more arbitrary and more indeterminable than with our own technique. It can be shown, however, that it is always strictly determined by important internal attitudes of mind which are not known to us at the moment at which they operate – which are as little known to us as the disturbing purposes of parapraxes and the provoking ones of chance actions.¹¹

I and many others after me have repeatedly made such experiments with names and numbers thought of at random, and a few of these have been published.¹² Here the procedure is to produce a series of associations to the name which has emerged; these latter associations are accordingly no longer completely free but have a link, like the associations to the elements of dreams. One continues doing this until one finds the impulse exhausted. But by then light will have been thrown both on the motive and the meaning of the random choice of the name. These experiments always lead to the same result; reports on them often cover a wealth of material and call for extensive expositions. The associations to *numbers* chosen at random are perhaps the most convincing; they run off so quickly and proceed with such incredible certainty to a hidden goal that the effect is really staggering. I will give you only one example of an analysis like this of a name, since dealing with it calls for a conveniently small amount of material.

In the course of treating a young man I had occasion to discuss this topic, and mentioned the thesis that, in spite of an apparently arbitrary choice, it is impossible to think of a name at random which does not turn out to be closely determined by the immediate circumstances, the characteristics of the subject of the experiment and his situation at the moment. Since he was sceptical, I suggested that he should make an experiment of the kind himself on the spot. I knew that he carried on particularly numerous relationships of every kind with married women and girls, so I thought he would have a specially large

¹¹ Freud covers 'Chance and Symptomatic Actions' in Lecture 4, the third on 'Parapraxes'. Although eminently forgettable, these unnecessary yet repetitive patterns of behaviour, such as humming to oneself or fidgeting with one's clothing, were, nonetheless, 'fully valid psychical acts'.

¹² In section A of ch. XII of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901).

choice open to him if it were to be a woman's name that he was asked to choose. He agreed to this. To my astonishment, or rather, perhaps, to his, no avalanche of women's names broke over me; he remained silent for a moment and then admitted that only a single name had come into his head and none other besides: 'Albine'. – How curious! But what does that name mean to you? How many 'Albines' do you know? – Strange to say, he knew no one called 'Albine' and nothing further occurred to him in response to the name. So it might be thought that the analysis had failed. But not at all; it was already complete, and no further associations were needed. The man had an unusually fair complexion and in conversation during the treatment I had often jokingly called him an albino. We were engaged at the time in determining the feminine part of his constitution. So it was he himself who was this 'Albine', the woman who was the most interesting to him at the moment.

In the same way tunes that come into one's head without warning turn out to be determined by and to belong to a train of thought which has a right to occupy one's mind though without one's being aware of its activity. It is easy to show then that the relation to the tune is based on its text or its origin. But I must be careful not to extend this assertion to really musical people, of whom, as it happens, I have had no experience. It may be that for such people the musical content of the tune is what decides its emergence. The earlier case is certainly the commoner one. I know of a young man, for instance, who was positively persecuted for a time by the tune (incidentally a charming one) of Paris's song in [Offenbach's] *La belle Hélène*, till his analysis drew his attention to a contemporary competition in his interest between an 'Ida' and a 'Helen'.¹³

If then things that occur to one quite freely are determined in this way and form parts of a connected whole, we shall no doubt be justified in concluding that things that occur to one with a single link – namely their link with the idea which serves as their starting-point – cannot be any less determined. Investigation shows, in fact, that, apart from the link we have given them with the initial idea, they are found to be dependent as well on groups of strongly emotional thoughts and interests, 'complexes', whose participation is not known at the moment – that is to say, is unconscious.

The occurrence of ideas with links of this kind has been the subject of very instructive experimental researches, which have played a notable part in the history of psychoanalysis. The school of Wundt had introduced what are known as association-experiments, in which a *stimulus word* is called out to the subject and he has the task of replying to it as quickly as possible with any *reaction* that occurs to him. It is then possible to study the interval that passes between the stimulus and the reaction, the nature of the answer given as a reaction, possible errors when the same experiment is repeated later, and so on. The Zurich school, led by Bleuler and Jung, found the explanation of the reactions that followed in the association-experiment by getting the subjects to throw light on their reactions by means of subsequent associations, if those reactions had shown striking features. It then turned out that these striking reactions were determined in the most definite fashion by the subject's complexes. In this manner Bleuler and Jung built the first bridge from experimental psychology to psychoanalysis.¹⁴

¹³ Strachey's footnote runs, 'Paris, who eloped with Helen, was at one time a shepherd on Mount Ida, where he delivered his judgement between three competing goddesses'.

¹⁴ The significant text is Jung's *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (trans. as *Psychology of the Unconscious* [1916; trans. 1917]).

Having learnt thus much, you will be able to say: 'We acknowledge now that thoughts that occur to one freely are determined and not arbitrary as we supposed. We admit that this is also true of thoughts occurring in response to the elements of dreams. But that is not what we are concerned with. You assert that what occurs to the dreamer in response to the dream-element will be determined by the psychical background (unknown to us) of that particular element. This does not seem to us to be proved. We quite expect that what occurs to the dreamer in response to the dream-element will turn out to be determined by one of the dreamer's complexes, but what good does that do us? This does not lead us to an understanding of dreams but, like the association-experiment, to a knowledge of these so-called complexes. But what have they got to do with dreams?'

You are right, but you are overlooking one factor. Moreover it is precisely the factor on account of which I did not choose the association-experiment as the starting-point of this exposition. In that experiment the single determinant of the reaction – that is, the stimulus-word – is arbitrarily chosen by us. The reaction is in that case an intermediary between the stimulus-word and the complex which has been aroused in the subject. In dreams the stimulus-word is replaced by something that is itself derived from the dreamer's mental life, from sources unknown to him, and may therefore very easily itself be a 'derivative of a complex'. It is therefore not precisely fantastic to suppose that the further associations linked to the dream-elements will be determined by the same complex as that of the element itself and will lead to its discovery.

Let me show you from another instance that the facts are as we expect. The forgetting of proper names is actually an excellent model of what happens in dream-analysis; the difference is only that events that are shared between two people in dream-analysis are combined in a single person in the parapraxis. If I forget a name temporarily, I nevertheless feel in myself a certainty that I know it – a certainty which in the case of the dreamer we only arrived at by the round-about path of the Bernheim experiment.¹⁵ The name which I have forgotten but which I know is, however, not accessible to me. Experience soon teaches me that thinking about it, with however much effort, is of no help. But in place of the forgotten name I can always call up one or several substitute names. It is only after a substitute name of this kind has occurred to me spontaneously that the conformity of this situation with that of dream-interpretation becomes obvious. Like this substitute name, the dream-element is not the right thing, but only takes the place of something else – of the genuine thing which I do not know and which I am to discover by means of the dream-analysis. The difference is once more only that in the case of forgetting the name, I recognize the substitute unhesitatingly as something ungentle, whereas we had to acquire this view laboriously in the case of the dream-element. Now in the case of forgetting a name there is also a method by which we can start from the substitute and arrive at the unconscious genuine thing, the forgotten name. If I direct my attention to the substitute names and allow further ideas

¹⁵ See note 5 above.

in response to them to occur to me, I arrive by shorter or longer *détours* at the forgotten name, and I find when this happens that both the spontaneous substitute name and the ones that I have called up are connected with the forgotten one and were determined by it.

I will describe an analysis of this kind to you. I noticed one day that I could not recall the name of the small country on the Riviera, of which Monte Carlo is the chief town. It was very tiresome, but so it was. I summoned up all that I knew about that country. I thought of Prince Albert of the House of Lusignan, of his marriages, of his devotion to deep-sea researches, and everything else I could bring together, but it was of no avail. So I gave up reflection and allowed substitute names to occur to me instead of the lost one. They came rapidly: Monte Carlo itself, then Piedmont, Albania, Montevideo, Colico. Of this series I was struck first by Albania, which was at once replaced by Montenegro, no doubt because of the contrast between white and black.¹⁶ I then saw that four of these substitute names contained the same syllable 'mon', then suddenly I had the forgotten word and exclaimed aloud: 'Monaco!' So the substitute names had in fact arisen from the forgotten one: the first four came from its first syllable while the last reproduced its syllabic structure and its whole last syllable. Moreover I was able to discover quite easily what it was that had temporarily deprived me of the name. Monaco is also the Italian name for Munich; and it was that town which exerted the inhibitory influence.

No doubt this example is a good one, but it is too simple. In other cases it would have been necessary to call up a longer string of ideas in response to the first substitute name, and then the analogy with dream-analysis would have been clearer. I have had experiences of that sort too. On one occasion a stranger had invited me to drink some Italian wine with him, but when we were in the inn it turned out that he had forgotten the name of the wine which he intended to order because of his very agreeable recollections of it. From a quantity of substitute ideas of different kinds which came into his head in place of the forgotten name, I was able to infer that thoughts about someone called Hedwig had made him forget the name. And he not only confirmed the fact that he had first tasted this wine when he was with someone of that name, but with the help of this discovery he recalled the name of the wine. He was happily married at the present time and this Hedwig belonged to earlier days which he had no wish to remember.

But if it is possible in the case of forgetting a name, it must also be possible in interpreting dreams to proceed from the substitute along the chain of associations attached to it and so to obtain access to the genuine thing which is being held back. From the example of the forgotten name we may conclude that the associations to the dream-element will be determined both by the dream-element and also by the unconscious genuine thing behind it. In this way, then, we seem to have produced some justification of our technique.

¹⁶ Strachey's note is helpful, recording the link between 'albus', the Latin for white, and 'negro', the Spanish or Portuguese for black.

Lecture 7

The manifest content of dreams and the latent dream-thoughts

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, – As you see, our study of parapraxes has not been unprofitable. Thanks to our labours over them we have, subject to the premisses I have explained to you,¹⁷ achieved two things: a conception of the nature of dream-elements and a technique for interpreting dreams. The conception of dream-elements tells us that they are ungenue things,¹⁸ substitutes for something else that is unknown to the dreamer (like the purpose of a parapraxis), substitutes for something the knowledge of which is present in the dreamer but which is inaccessible to him. We are in hopes that it will be possible to carry over the same conception to whole dreams, which are made up of such elements. Our technique lies in employing free association to these elements in order to bring about the emergence of other substitutive structures, which will enable us to arrive at what is concealed from view.

I now propose that we should introduce a change into our nomenclature which will give us more freedom of movement. Instead of speaking of ‘concealed’, ‘inaccessible’, or ‘ungenue’, let us adopt the correct description and say ‘inaccessible to the dreamer’s consciousness’ or ‘*unconscious*’.¹⁹ I mean nothing else by this than what may be suggested to you when you think of a word that has escaped you or the disturbing purpose in a parapraxis – that is to say, I mean nothing else than ‘*unconscious at the moment*’. In contrast to this, we can of course speak of the dream-elements themselves, and the substitutive ideas that have been newly arrived at from them by association, as ‘*conscious*’. This nomenclature so far involves no theoretical construction. No objection can be made to using the word ‘unconscious’ as an apt and easily understandable description.

If we carry over our conception of the separate elements to the whole dream, it follows that the dream as a whole is a distorted substitute for something else, something unconscious, and that the task of interpreting a dream is to discover this unconscious material. From this, however, there at once follow three important rules, which we must obey during the work of interpreting dreams.

(1) We must not concern ourselves with what the dream *appears* to tell us, whether it is intelligible or absurd, clear or confused, since it cannot possibly be the unconscious material we are in search of. (An obvious limitation to this rule will force itself on our notice later.)²⁰ (2) We must restrict our work to calling up the substitutive ideas for each element, we must not reflect about them, or consider whether they contain anything relevant, and we must not trouble ourselves with how far they diverge from the dream-element. (3) We

¹⁷ See pp. 53–61 above.

¹⁸ See p. 60 above.

¹⁹ Freud returns to this and refines it in Lecture 13, ‘Archaic and Infantile Features’. There the Unconscious is ‘no longer the name of what is latent at the moment; the unconscious is a particular realm of the mind with its own wishful impulses, its own mode of expression and its peculiar mental mechanisms which are not in force elsewhere’. He does not discount the use of ‘the day’s residues’ in the formation of some part of unconscious reference.

²⁰ See Lecture 8, ‘Children’s Dreams’. These are ‘short, clear, coherent, easy to understand and unambiguous’.

must wait till the concealed unconscious material we are in search of emerges of its own accord, exactly as the forgotten word 'Monaco' did in the experiment I have described.²¹

Now, too, we can understand to what extent it is a matter of indifference how much or how little the dream is remembered and, above all, how accurately or how uncertainly. For the remembered dream is not the genuine material but a distorted substitute for it, which should assist us, by calling up other substitutive images, to come nearer to the genuine material, to make what is unconscious in the dream conscious. If our memory has been inaccurate, therefore, it has merely made a further distortion of this substitute – a distortion, moreover, which cannot have been without a reason.

The work of interpreting can be performed on one's own dreams just as on other people's. In fact one learns more from one's own: the process carries more conviction. If, then, we make the attempt, we notice that something is opposing our work. It is true that ideas occur to us, but we do not allow all of them to count; testing and selecting influences make themselves felt. In the case of one idea we may say to ourselves: 'No, this is not relevant, it does not belong here'; in the case of another: 'this is too senseless' and of a third: 'this is totally unimportant'. And we can further observe how with objections of this sort we may smother ideas and finally expel them altogether, even before they have become quite clear. Thus on the one hand we keep too close to the idea which was our starting-point, the dream-element itself; and on the other hand we interfere with the outcome of the free associations by making a selection. If we are not by ourselves while interpreting the dream, if we get someone else to interpret it, we become very clearly aware of yet another motive which we employ in making this illicit selection, for sometimes we say to ourselves: 'No, this idea is too disagreeable; I will not or cannot report it.'

These objections are obviously a threat to the success of our work. We must guard against them, and in our own case we do so by firmly resolving not to give way to them. If we are analysing someone else's dream, we do so by laying it down as an inviolable rule that he must not hold back any idea from us, even if it gives rise to one of the four objections – of being too unimportant or too senseless or of being irrelevant or too distressing to be reported.²² The dreamer promises to obey the rule, and we may be annoyed afterwards to find how badly he keeps his promise when the occasion arises. We may explain this to ourselves to begin with by supposing that, in spite of our authoritative assurance, he has not yet realized the justification for free association, and we may perhaps have the notion of first convincing him theoretically by giving him books to read or by sending him to lectures which may convert him into a supporter of our views on free association. But we shall be held back from blunders like this when we consider that in the case of ourselves, as to the strength of whose convictions we can, after all, hardly be in doubt, the same objections arise to certain ideas and are only set aside subsequently – by a court of appeal, as it were.

Instead of being annoyed by the dreamer's disobedience, we may take advantage of these experiences by learning something new from them – something which is all the more important the less we are expecting it. We perceive that the work of interpreting dreams is carried out in the face of a *resistance*, which opposes it and of which the critical objections are manifestations. This resistance is independent of the dreamer's theoretical

²¹ See p. 61 above.

²² Strachey's note refers us to Lecture 19, 'Resistance and Repression'. Freud there advises any patient to 'avoid giving way to any motive which would lead him to make a selection among these associations or to exclude any of them'.

conviction. We learn still more, indeed. We discover that a critical objection of this kind never turns out to be justified. On the contrary, the ideas which people try to suppress in this way turn out *invariably* to be the most important ones and those which are decisive in our search for the unconscious material. It amounts, in fact, to a special distinguishing mark, if an idea is accompanied by an objection like this.

This resistance is something entirely new: a phenomenon which we have come upon in connection with our premisses,²³ but one which was not included among them. The appearance of this new factor in our reckoning comes to us as a not altogether pleasant surprise. We suspect at once that it is not going to make our work any easier. It might mislead us into abandoning our whole concern with dreams: something so unimportant as a dream and, on top of that, all these difficulties instead of a simple straightforward technique! But, on the other hand, the difficulties might act precisely as a stimulus and make us suspect that the work will be worth the trouble. We regularly come up against resistance when we try to make our way forward from the substitute which is the dream-element to the unconscious material hidden behind it. So we may conclude that there must be something of importance concealed behind the substitute. Otherwise, what is the point of the difficulties that are trying to keep the concealment going? If a child refuses to open his clenched fist to show what he has in it, we may feel sure that it is something wrong – something he ought not to have.

The moment we introduce the dynamic idea of a resistance into the facts of the case, we must simultaneously reflect that this factor is something variable in quantity. There may be greater and smaller resistances, and we are prepared to find these differences showing themselves during our work as well. We may perhaps be able to link with this another experience we also meet with during the work of interpreting dreams: sometimes it requires only a single response, or no more than a few, to lead us from a dream-element to the unconscious material behind it, while on other occasions long chains of associations and the overcoming of many critical objections are required for bringing this about. We shall conclude that these differences relate to the changing magnitude of the resistance, and we shall probably turn out to be right. If the resistance is small, the substitute cannot be far distant from the unconscious material; but a greater resistance means that the unconscious material will be greatly distorted and that the path will be a long one from the substitute back to the unconscious material.

And now perhaps it is time to take a dream and try our technique upon it and see whether our expectations are confirmed. Yes, but what dream are we to choose for the purpose? You cannot imagine how hard I find it to decide; nor can I yet make the nature of my difficulties plain to you. There must obviously be dreams which have on the whole been subjected to only a little distortion, and the best plan would be to begin with them. But what dreams have been least distorted? The ones that are intelligible and not confused, two examples of which I have already put before you?²⁴ That would be leading us quite astray. Investigation shows that such dreams have been subjected to an extraordinarily high degree of distortion. If, however, I were to disregard particular requirements and were to select a dream at haphazard, you would probably be greatly disappointed. We might have to notice or record such a profusion of ideas in response to the separate dream-elements that we should be unable to make head or tail of the work. If we write

²³ See pp. 56–60 above.

²⁴ See note 8, and Lecture 5, 'Difficulties and First Approaches'.

down a dream and then make a note of all the ideas that emerge in response to it, these may prove to be many times longer than the text of the dream. The best plan would therefore seem to be to choose out a number of short dreams for analysis, each of which will at least tell us something or confirm some point. So we will make up our minds to take that course, unless experience may perhaps show us where we can really find dreams that have been only slightly distorted.²⁵

I can however think of something else that will make things easier for us – something, moreover, which lies along our path. Instead of starting on the interpretation of *whole* dreams, we will restrict ourselves to a few dream-elements, and we will trace out in a number of examples how these can be explained by applying our technique to them.

(a) A lady reported that she very often dreamt when she was a child that *God wore a paper cocked-hat on his head*. What can you make of that without the dreamer's help? It sounds completely nonsensical. But it ceases to be nonsense when we hear from the lady that she used to have a hat of that sort put on her head at meals when she was a child, because she could never resist taking furtive glances at her brothers' and sisters' plates to see whether they had been given larger helpings than she had. So the hat was intended to act like a pair of blinkers. This, incidentally, was a piece of historical information²⁶ and was given without any difficulty. The interpretation of this element and at the same time of the whole short dream was easily made with the help of a further idea that occurred to the dreamer: 'As I had heard that God was omniscient and saw everything', she said, 'the dream can only mean that I knew everything and saw everything, even though they tried to prevent me.' Perhaps this example is too simple.

(b) A sceptical woman patient had a longish dream in the course of which some people told her about my book on jokes²⁷ and praised it highly. Something came in then about a 'channel', *perhaps it was another book that mentioned a channel, or something else about a channel . . . she didn't know . . . it was all so indistinct*.

No doubt you will be inclined to expect that the element 'channel', since it was so indistinct, would be inaccessible to interpretation. You are right in suspecting a difficulty; but the difficulty did not arise from the indistinctness: both the difficulty and the indistinctness arose from another cause. Nothing occurred to the dreamer in connection with 'channel', and I could of course throw no light on it. A little later – it was the next day, in point of fact – she told me that she had thought of something that *might* have something to do with it. It was a joke, too, – a joke she had heard. On the steamer between Dover and Calais a well-known author fell into conversation with an Englishman. The latter had occasion to quote the phrase: 'Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas. [It is only a step from the sublime to the ridiculous.]' 'Yes,' replied the author, '*le Pas de Calais*' – meaning that he thought France sublime and England ridiculous. But the *Pas de Calais* is a channel – the English Channel.²⁸ You will ask whether I think this had anything to do with the dream. Certainly I think so; and it provides the solution of the puzzling element of the dream. Can you doubt that this joke was already present before the dream occurred, as the unconscious thought behind the element 'channel'? Can you suppose that it was introduced as a subsequent invention? The association betrayed the scepticism

²⁵ See note 20 above; more detail can be found in Lecture 8, 'Children's Dreams'.

²⁶ See p. 57 above.

²⁷ *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905).

²⁸ Strachey's note: 'Actually, the Straits of Dover'.

which lay concealed behind the patient's ostensible admiration; and her resistance against revealing this was no doubt the common cause both of her delay in producing the association and of the indistinctness of the dream-element concerned. Consider the relation of the dream-element to its unconscious background: it was, as it were, a fragment of the background, an allusion to it, but it was made quite incomprehensible by being isolated.

(c) As part of a longish dream a patient dreamt that *several members of his family were sitting round a table of a peculiar shape*, etc. It occurred to him in connection with the table that he had seen a piece of furniture of the kind when he was on a visit to a particular family. His thoughts then went on to say that there was a peculiar relationship between the father and son in this family; and he soon added that the same thing was true of the relationship between himself and his own father. So the table had been taken into the dream in order to point out this parallel.

This dreamer had been long familiar with the requirement of dream-interpretation. Another person might perhaps have taken objection to such a trivial detail as the shape of a table being made the subject of investigation. But in fact we regard nothing in a dream as accidental or indifferent, and we expect to obtain information precisely from the explanation of such trivial and pointless details. You may perhaps also feel surprised that the thought that 'the same thing was true of us and of them' should have been expressed by, in particular, the choice of a table [*Tisch*]. But this too becomes clear when you learn that the name of the family in question was *Tischler* [literally, 'carpenter']. By making his relations sit at this *Tisch*, he was saying that they too were *Tischlers*. Incidentally, you will notice how inevitably one is led into being indiscreet when one reports these dream-interpretations. And you will guess that this is one of the difficulties I have hinted at over the choice of examples. I could easily have taken another example in place of this one, but I should probably merely have avoided *this* indiscretion at the price of committing another.

The moment seems to me to have arrived for introducing two terms, which we could have made use of long ago. We will describe what the dream actually tells us as the *manifest dream-content*, and the concealed material, which we hope to reach by pursuing the ideas that occur to the dreamer, as the *latent dream-thoughts*. Thus we are here considering the relations between the manifest content of the dream and the latent dream-thoughts as shown in these examples. These relations may be of very many different kinds. In examples (a) and (b) the manifest element is also a constituent of the latent thoughts, though only a small fragment of them. A small piece of the large and complicated psychical structure of unconscious dream-thoughts has made its way into the manifest dream as well – a fragment of them, or, in other cases, an allusion to them, a caption, as it were, or an abbreviation in telegraphic style. It is the business of the work of interpretation to complete these fragments or this allusion into a whole – which was achieved particularly nicely in the case of example (b). Thus one form of the distortion which constitutes the dream-work is replacement by a fragment or an allusion. In example (c) another kind of relation is to be observed in addition; and we shall find this expressed in a purer and clearer form in the examples which follow.

(d) The dreamer *was pulling a lady* (a particular one, of his acquaintance) *out from behind a bed*. He himself found the meaning of this dream-element from the first idea that occurred to him. It meant that he was giving this lady preference.²⁹

²⁹ Strachey's note: 'This example . . . depends on a purely verbal point; the resemblance between the German word for 'pulling out' (*hervorziehen*) and 'preferring' (*vorziehen*)'.

(e) Another man dreamt that *his brother was in a box* [*Kasten*]. In his first response '*Kasten*' was replaced by '*Schränk* [cupboard]', and the second gave the interpretation: his brother was restricting himself [*schränkt sich ein*].

(f) The dreamer *climbed to the top of a mountain, which commanded an unusually extensive view*. This sounds quite rational and you might suppose that there is nothing to interpret in it and that all we have to do is to enquire what memory gave rise to the dream and the reason for its being stirred up. But you would be wrong. It turned out that this dream stood in need of interpreting just as much as any other, more confused one. For none of his own mountain climbs occurred to the dreamer, but he thought of the fact that an acquaintance of his was the editor of a 'Survey', dealing with our relations with the most remote parts of the earth. Thus the latent dream-thought was an identification of the dreamer with the 'surveyor'.

Here we have a new type of relation between the manifest and latent dream-elements. The former is not so much a distortion of the latter as a representation of it, a plastic, concrete, portrayal of it, taking its start from the wording. But precisely on that account it is once more a distortion, for we have long since forgotten from what concrete image the word originated and consequently fail to recognize it when it is replaced by the image. When you consider that the manifest dream is made up predominantly of visual images and more rarely of thoughts and words, you can imagine what importance attaches to this kind of relation in the construction of dreams. You will see, too, that in this way it becomes possible in regard to a large number of abstract thoughts to create pictures to act as substitutes for them in the manifest dream while at the same time serving the purpose of concealment. This is the technique of the familiar picture-puzzles. Why it is that these representations have an appearance of being jokes is a special problem into which we need not enter here.³⁰

There is a fourth kind of relation between the manifest and latent elements, which I must continue to hold back from you until we come upon its key-word in considering technique.³¹ Even so I shall not have given you a full list; but it will serve our purpose.

Do you feel bold enough now to venture upon the interpretation of a *whole* dream? Let us make the experiment, to see whether we are well enough equipped for the task. I shall of course not select one of the most obscure ones; nevertheless, it will be one that gives a well-marked picture of the attributes of a dream.³²

³⁰ This is more of the nature of a pun or ironic substitution. In Lecture 15, 'Uncertainties and Criticisms', Freud recounts the tale of a woman patient who had recently lost her father. He kept appearing to her in dreams, saying: 'It's quarter past eleven, it's half past eleven, it's quarter to twelve'. This was understood to be a revolt against the father, who required his children to be punctual at mealtimes. When talking in terms apparently remote from the dream in question, she let slip that there had been discussion about psychology the day before, and a relative had remarked how "The *Urmensch* [primal man] survives in all of us". This had been transmuted in the dream into a '*Uhrmensch*' or 'clock-man'.

³¹ i.e. in the lecture on 'Symbolism in Dreams' (no. 10). These 'key-words' or symbols were not a 'piece of virtuosity', but valuable guides in the laborious work of association and deduction.

³² He was to refer to it in Lecture 9, 'The Censorship of Dreams', where he dwelt on his experience that apparently inessential elements of the dream were often the most salient in analysis: 'this displacement of accent [emphasis] is one of the chief instruments of dream-distortion and it is what gives the dream the strangeness on account of which the dreamer himself is not inclined to recognize it as his own production'.

Very well then. A lady who, though she was still young, had been married for many years had the following dream: *She was at the theatre with her husband. One side of the stalls was completely empty. Her husband told her that Elise L. and her fiancé had wanted to go too, but had only been able to get bad seats – three for 1 florin 50 kreuzers – and of course they could not take those. She thought it would not really have done any harm if they had.*

The first thing the dreamer reported to us was that the precipitating cause of the dream was touched on in its manifest content. Her husband had in fact told her that Elise L., who was approximately her contemporary, had just become engaged. The dream was a reaction to this information. We know already³³ that it is easy in the case of many dreams to point to a precipitating cause like this from the previous day, and that the dreamer is often able to trace this for us without any difficulty. The dreamer in the present case put similar information at our disposal for other elements of the manifest dream as well. – Where did the detail come from about one side of the stalls being empty? It was an allusion to a real event of the previous week. She had planned to go to a particular play and had therefore bought her tickets *early* – so early that she had had to pay a booking fee. When they got to the theatre it turned out that her anxiety was quite uncalled-for, since *one side of the stalls was almost empty*. It would have been early enough if she had bought the tickets on the actual day of the performance. Her husband had kept on teasing her for having been *in too much of a hurry*. – What was the origin of the 1 florin 50 kreuzers? It arose in quite another connection, which had nothing to do with the former one but also alluded to some information from the previous day. Her sister-in-law had been given a present of 150 florins by her husband and had been in a great hurry – the silly goose – to rush off to the jewellers' and exchange the money for a piece of jewellery. – Where did the 'three' come from? She could think of nothing in connection with that, unless we counted the idea that her newly-engaged friend, Elise L., was only three months her junior, though she herself had been a married woman for nearly ten years. – And the absurd notion of taking three tickets for only two people? She had nothing to say to that, and refused to report any further ideas or information.

But all the same, she had given us so much material in these few associations that it was possible to guess the latent dream-thoughts from them. We cannot help being struck by the fact that periods of time occur at several points in the information she gave us about the dream, and these provide a common factor between the different parts of the material. She took the theatre tickets *too early*, bought them *over-hurriedly* so that she had to pay more than was necessary; so too her sister-in-law had been *in a hurry* to take her money to the jewellers and buy some jewellery with it, as though otherwise she would *miss it*. If, in addition to the 'too early' and 'in a hurry' which we have stressed, we take into account the precipitating cause of the dream – the news that her friend, though only three months *her junior*, had nevertheless got an excellent husband – and the criticism of her sister-in-law expressed in the idea that it was *absurd* of her to be in such a hurry, then we find ourselves presented almost spontaneously with the following construction of the latent dream-thoughts, for which the manifest dream is a severely distorted substitute:

'Really it was *absurd* of me to be in such a hurry to get married! I can see from Elise's example that *I* could have got a husband later too.' (Being in too great a hurry was represented by her own behaviour in buying the tickets and by her sister-in-law's in buying the

³³ See p. 57 above.